

# MEETING SUMMARY REPORT

## 13<sup>th</sup> Annual Board Meeting 2024

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### Day 1:

<b>Date:</b>	<b>Time Period:</b>
Wednesday 11, September 2024	13:30 – 16:30 (Vietnam Time, UTC+7)
<b>Mode of Meeting:</b>	<b>Minutes Taker:</b>
Hybrid Meeting	MOST, Vietnam and e-ASIA Secretariat

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### OPENING OF ABM 2024

**Time Period:** 13:30 - 13:45

**Moderator:** *Dr. Yukio Kemmochi, e-ASIA Secretariat*

**Welcome Remarks by Ms. Lê Thị Việt Lâm, Deputy Director General, Ministry of Science and Technology, Vietnam:**

- Ms. Lam welcomed all participants to the 13th Annual Board Meeting of e-ASIA, emphasizing the participation of 24 member organizations from 14 countries. She highlighted the program’s achievements in fostering collaborative research, promoting innovation, and contributing to economic development. The agenda includes discussions on the annual activity report, future proposals, simplification of the application process, and amendments to the program’s status. She expressed hope for productive talks.

**Opening Remarks by Ms. Emi Kaneko, Secretary General, e-ASIA Secretariat:**

- Ms. Kaneko welcomed participants and acknowledged their commitment to the e-ASIA Joint Research Program. She reiterated the importance of the annual meeting for addressing program-related issues and outlined the agenda, which includes a progress report and proposals for operational improvements. She encouraged members to share new ideas for collaboration.

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**Time Period:** 13:45 - 14:35

**Greetings from MOs**

**Moderator:** *Dr. Yukio Kemmochi, e-ASIA Secretariat*

Representatives from the following member organizations introduced themselves:

1. Australia, NHMRC - Dr. Nicholas Johnson
2. Cambodia, MISIT - Dr. Socheat Keo
3. Indonesia, BRIN - Professor Agus Haryono
4. Japan, MEXT - Mr. Shinsuke Okada
5. Japan, JST - Dr. Masae Sugawara
6. Japan, AMED - Dr. Yasushi Ogasaka
7. Malaysia, MOSTI - Ms. Nor Syamsida binti Ismail
8. Myanmar, MOST - Dr. Cho Co Lwin
9. New Zealand, MBIE - Dr. Kieran Knight
10. The Philippines, DOST - Dr. Leah J. Buendia
11. Singapore, A\*STAR - Mr. Ek Siang Oeij
12. Thailand, NSTDA - Ms. Sronkanok Tangjaijit
13. Thailand, NRCT - Ms. Kwansiri Chonyuth
14. Thailand, PMU-B - Dr. Pavadee Aungkavattana
15. USA, NIAID - Ms. Joyelle Dominique

A group photo was taken to commemorate the event.

## SESSION 1: ACTIVITY REPORT

**Time Period:** 14:35 - 14:55

**Reporter:** *Dr. Yukio Kemmochi, e-ASIA Secretariat*

Dr. Kemmochi presented the key annual activities of the e-ASIA Joint Research Program from September 2023 to August 2024, which included:

1. Hybrid meeting of the 12th Annual Board Meeting in Perth, Australia.
2. Schedule for the 13th Call for Proposals.
3. Research Fields for the 13th Call for Proposals:
  - 1) Health research on the topic of infectious disease and immunology, including antimicrobial resistance
  - 2) Food and health interdisciplinary research area on the topic of personalized nutrition
  - 3) Alternative Energy with three subtopics, renewable energy, energy storage, and energy management system
  - 4) Agriculture (Food), focusing on climate-smart food production
4. Successful Proposals from the 12th Joint Call, focusing on four proposals from the field of Climate Change and Health Research, and five proposals from the field of Environmental (Low Carbon Society)
  - A. Climate Change and Health Research
    - 1) Emanating of S. Mekogi, the Final Push

- 2) Undercovering The Burden of Asymptomatic Malaria: Dissecting Immune Responses to Infection to Overcome Immunosuppression and Improve Vaccination Strategies
- 3) Nontuberculous Mycobacterial (NTM) Infections Associated with Climate Change and Major Weather Events: Enhancing Surveillance and Migration Strategies
- 4) Climate Change Adaption to Smoke Haze for Improved Child Health in Southeast Asia

B. Environmental (Low Carbon Society)

- 1) Coastal Ecosystems as Nature Climate Solution in Asia
  - 2) Developing Integrated Agriculture Waste
  - 3) Closed-Loop Recycle Process of Spent Primary and Secondary Batteries and Reutilization for The Environmental Applications and Circular Economies
  - 4) Design of Innovative Sustainable Urban Mobility in Asia
  - 5) AI-Supported Tool Development for Decarbonized Food System
5. Preparatory Discussions for the 14th Joint Call for Proposals.
  6. Stakeholder Interaction through the first Knowledge Sharing Workshop.
  7. Impact Assessment activities

Additionally, Ms. Kaneko noted an amendment to the program's statute, indicating that the National Cancer Institute (NCI) from the USA has withdrawn and terminated its membership.

## SESSION 2: NEXT CALL FOR PROPOSAL

**Time Period:** 14:55 – 16:30

**Moderator:** Ms. Emi Kaneko, e-ASIA Secretariat

Ms. Kaneko outlined the current activities for 2024, including:

- **From April to June 2024:** The Secretariat implemented the survey and collected in principle interest from member organizations regarding the candidate call topics for the next round of call for proposals.
- **From July to September 2024:** The Secretariat held online Survey Discussion Meetings and came up with four candidate topics.
- **September 10<sup>th</sup>, 2024:** Call Development Workshops focused on three selected areas.

The suggested timeline from September 12, 2024, to January 2026, covering the 13th and 14th Calls for Proposals was presented. The presentation continued with the workshop discussion outputs from the representatives including the following.

### Report Outcomes 1: Call Development Workshop in Health

- **Reporter:** Mr. Takashi Hotta, AMED, Japan
- **Participants:** NHMRC, BRIN, PMU-B, NIAID, Vietnam MOST, and AMED
- **Agenda:** The workshop included presentations on research topics, discussions on call guidelines, and confirmation of actions and timelines.
- **Outcomes:**
  - 1) The call topic was agreed upon as **“Infectious Diseases and Immunology,”** including antimicrobial resistance.
  - 2) Cancer was deemed ineligible for the 14th Call due to only two member organizations proposing this topic.
  - 3) Modifications to the draft call guidelines were discussed, including:
    - i. Revisions on antimicrobial resistance related sentences in the research area section by AMED.
    - ii. Addition of the guideline sentences about the application submission by a previous awardee by NIAID
    - iii. Addition of the description about MO’s complete discretion on eligibility check
  - 4) Timeline: Pre-final version due by October 1, final version by November 29.

### Report Outcomes 2: Call Development Workshop on Alternative Energy

- **Reporter:** Dr. Enrico C. Paringit, DOST-PCIEERD, the Philippines
- **Participants:** DOST-PCIEERD, BRIN, JST, and NRCT
- **Objective:** Finalize call topics and texts for Alternative Energy with the participating members
- **Sub-topics Proposed:**
  - 1) Hydrogen (Production & Storage, Biohydrogen, and Hydrogen from Waste)
  - 2) Fuel (Biofuel & Aviation Fuel)
  - 3) Energy Storage

### Report Outcomes 3: Call Development Workshop on Disaster Risk Reduction and Management

- **Reporter:** Professor Agus Haryono and Dr. Adrin Tohari, BRIN, Indonesia
- **Participants:** JST, BRIN, and DOST-PCIEERD.
- **Focus:** Integrated advanced technologies in disaster management aligned with global priorities.
- **Sub-topics Proposed:**
  - 1) Advanced and novel flood, earthquake, or other disaster management system
  - 2) Use of emerging technologies to reduce and manage the disaster risk related to climate change adaptation
  - 3) Disaster risk reduction by utilizing remote sensing and ICT technologies
  - 4) Risk analysis, assessment and visualization, assessment of hazardous damage
  - 5) Multi-natural hazard observation, monitoring, modelling, forecasting and early warning systems

- 6) Disaster risk reduction proofing systems for critical infrastructures
- 7) Modeling and simulation of disasters

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**Discussion Point:** Health Topic

**Key Message Summary:**

#### **NIAID**

- **Progress Demonstration:** Emphasized the importance of requiring Principal Investigators (PIs) to demonstrate progress in their research when reapplying for funding, to avoid repetitive funding of the same projects.
- **Clarification on Funding:** Agreed that teams that have successfully completed before could be funded again but stressed the need for clear guidelines.

#### **NHMRC**

- **Application Guidance:** Suggested that the application form should remain unchanged, but applicants should be encouraged to highlight relevant past work in their proposals.
- **Concerns on Reapplication:** Raised concerns about the potential for the same teams to be funded repeatedly, advocating for analysis to understand the frequency of such occurrences.

#### **AMED**

- **Reapplication Balance:** Discussed the benefits and drawbacks of allowing reapplications from successful teams, noting that while familiarity with the e-ASIA JRP framework is advantageous, it's important to provide opportunities for a wider range of applicants.
- **Reviewer Discretion:** Concluded that the decision to fund should rest with the reviewers, considering previous funding experiences without it being a strict eligibility issue.

#### **DOST**

- **Diversification of Topics:** DOST observed that most health projects focus on infectious diseases and suggested the need to diversify the priority areas to include topics like mental health.

#### **e-ASIA Secretariat**

- **Encouragement for New Topics:** The Secretariat acknowledged the suggestion to include more health topics but restated that proposals must have support from three or more countries. They encouraged health-related agencies to consider encompassing various health-related topics for upcoming calls.

## Conclusion of the Discussion

In conclusion, the discussions underscored a shared commitment to strengthening the e-ASIA Joint Research Program by ensuring that applicants demonstrate tangible progress in their research when reapplying for funding. Concerns regarding the potential for repetitive funding of the same teams were raised, highlighting the need for clearer guidelines and data analysis on application trends. The participants advocated for expanding the research focus beyond infectious diseases to include areas like mental health. The Secretariat encouraged member organizations to propose diverse health-related topics, emphasizing the importance of securing support from multiple countries to enhance collaboration in future calls.

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**Discussion Point:** Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Topic

### Key Message Summary:

#### e-ASIA Secretariat

- **Invitation for Participation:** Highlighted the need to encourage more countries to participate in research proposals.

#### BRIN

- **Challenges of Participation:** Acknowledged the difficulty in inviting countries due to diverse disaster types across regions. They emphasized the importance of including multiple member organizations (MOs) to ensure a broader range of proposals.
- **Collaboration Potential:** Mentioned potential collaborations with researchers in Malaysia and expressed hope for MOSTI's involvement in disaster risk management.

#### MOSTI

- **Broadening Participation:** Indicated Malaysia's interest in participating not only in disaster management but also in alternative energy topics. They committed to bringing this suggestion to top management for consideration and will update e-ASIA on their feedback.
- **Disaster Context:** Noted Malaysia's experiences with floods, tsunamis, and landslides, although not typhoons, and expressed a need to consult with their leadership on potential contributions.

#### DOST

- **Focus on AI for Risk Assessment:** Proposed leveraging AI for risk assessment concerning various natural disasters, including volcanoes, earthquakes, and typhoons. They highlighted the Philippines' wealth of data in weather and disaster management as a critical resource for improving risk mitigation strategies.

## Conclusion of the Discussion

In conclusion, the discussions highlighted the importance of fostering greater participation from diverse countries in research proposals in the context of disaster management. BRIN emphasized the challenges posed by varying disaster types and the necessity for multiple member organizations to contribute to a wider range of proposals. MOSTI expressed Malaysia's commitment to engaging in these areas and will seek guidance from their leadership on potential contributions. DOST proposed utilizing AI for risk assessment, leveraging the Philippines' rich data resources to enhance disaster mitigation strategies. Collectively, these insights point to a collaborative effort to strengthen research initiatives and address pressing regional challenges.

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**Discussion Point:** Alternative Energy Topic

### Key Message Summary:

#### DOST-PCIEERD

- **Strengthening Collaboration:** Member organizations agree on the need to enhance researcher collaboration, noting that current partnerships often lack depth and focus mainly on events. Evaluations will prioritize the strength of these partnerships.
- **Common Challenges:** Organizations recognized shared challenges in the energy sector. Identifying common interests during call preparation and emphasizing them in evaluations is essential. Proponents should clearly state their shared objectives in collaborative research efforts.

#### DOST

- **Expanding Collaboration:** Highlighted the challenges posed by limited understanding of other agencies in the member organization in different countries, which restricts potential collaboration opportunities. It was noted that there may be agencies within other member organizations or other organizations within the same countries working on similar topics as ours. To address this limitation, we should strategically invite non-member organizations to partner with us, thereby enhancing our research efforts. While long-term partnerships are one criterion for partnership eligibility, it is essential to also embrace new collaborations to expand our network and include agencies engaged in relevant research.

## Conclusion of the Discussion

In conclusion, enhancing collaboration among member organizations is essential for addressing shared challenges in the energy sector. By prioritizing the depth of partnerships and strategically inviting non-member organizations, we can expand our network and foster more impactful research initiatives. Clear articulation of shared objectives will further strengthen our collaborative efforts.

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**Discussion Points:** Interdisciplinary Research Opportunities**Key Message Summary:****e-ASIA Secretariat**

- **Interdisciplinary Research Update:** The Secretariat discussed previous conversations on interdisciplinary research focused on innovative materials, particularly sustainable materials. The original plan was to create a broad call topic encompassing materials, agriculture, and disaster risk management. However, disaster risk management has since been separated from this broader scope, leaving materials and agriculture for further consideration.

**DOST**

- **Importance of Interdisciplinary Research:** emphasized the growing trend among researchers to incorporate multiple areas of expertise, making interdisciplinary research essential. They noted that current projects often blend fields such as agronomy, soil science, mathematics, and AI, highlighting the need for adaptation to contemporary challenges. This collaborative approach not only enhances relevance but also attracts diverse participants, ultimately enriching the research landscape. For example, DRR is inherently interdisciplinary, encompassing various fields such as health, agriculture, social sciences, and economics. Each of these areas contributes valuable insights and approaches, reinforcing the idea that effective DRR requires collaboration across disciplines to address complex challenges comprehensively.

**BRIN**

- **Challenges of Interdisciplinary Research in Proposal Submission:** BRIN raised a concern regarding interdisciplinary research due to their national regulations limiting researchers to one proposal per call round. This restriction poses challenges for projects that span multiple fields, such as applying AI to both alternative energy and health, as it prevents researchers from submitting multiple proposals in a year.

**e-ASIA Secretariat**

- **Clarity for International Partners:** Highlight the need for international researchers to understand national rules that may not be widely known.
- **Common vs. National Guidelines:** The call guidelines should consist of a common part applicable to all and a national annex with specific requirements for each participating country.
- **Specific Requirements:** Each organization should outline unique submission processes, such as Indonesia's rule allowing only one proposal per researcher.
- **Facilitating Collaboration:** Clear communication of national regulations helps prevent misunderstandings and promotes smoother proposal submissions.



**Conclusion of the Discussion**

In conclusion, the e-ASIA Secretariat and member organizations emphasize the importance of interdisciplinary research in addressing contemporary challenges. While this collaborative approach enhances relevance and attracts diverse expertise, challenges remain, particularly regarding national regulations that limit proposal submissions for interdisciplinary projects. To facilitate effective collaboration, it is crucial to communicate national guidelines alongside common call requirements, ensuring that all researchers are aware of the specific submission processes and regulations that may impact their proposals.

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The meeting closed at 16:30 (UTC+7).

**Day 2:****Date:**

Thursday 12, September 2024

**Overall Time Period**

09:00 – 16:30 (Vietnam Time, UTC+7)

**Mode of Meeting:**

Hybrid Meeting

**Minutes Taker:**

MOST Vietnam and e-ASIA Secretariat

**WELCOME BACK REMARK****Time Period:** 09:00 - 09:05**Moderator:** Ms. Emi Kaneko, e-ASIA Secretariat**Speaker:** Ms. Lê Thị Việt Lâm, MOST, Vietnam

- Ms. Emi Kaneko opened the second day of the annual Board meeting. Following her, Ms. Lam, representing MOST, welcomed participants back and thanked them for their contributions to the previous day's discussions.

**SESSION 3: PROGRESS REPORT ON IMPACT ASSESSMENT****Time Period:** 09:05 - 10:30**Moderator:** Ms. Emi Kaneko, e-ASIA Secretariat**Presenter:** Dr. Yukio Kemmochi, e-ASIA Secretariat

- In Session 3, Ms. Emi Kaneko introduced the purpose of this session, which is to report progress on impact assessment of the e-ASIA Joint Research Program since its inauguration in 2012. Reflecting on discussions from the previous annual Board meeting in Perth, she emphasized the need to evaluate the program's impact after more than ten years. A working group has been established to address this, and the session aims to present their progress and gather input from board members.

**Discussion Point:** Improvement on Strategies for Impact Assessment**Key Message Summary:****NHMRC**

- **Challenges:** Acknowledged the challenges of conducting impact analysis and highlighted the need to compare the outcomes of the e-ASIA Joint Research Program with a scenario in which the program did not exist, questioning if the same collaborations would have occurred naturally.

- **Case Studies:** Suggested developing case studies once projects reach a certain level of development to better articulate tangible outcomes.

#### DOST

- **Impact Assessment Presentation:** Recommended improving the impact assessment presentation by identifying the status of research before e-ASIA and measuring the changes after implementation.
- **Tracking Outcomes:** Urged tracking project completion rates and outcomes, focusing on indicators such as processes developed, products created, and publications produced.
- **Diverse Involvement:** Stressed the importance of involving a diverse group in the impact assessment efforts, rather than relying on a single individual, to ensure a thorough analysis.

#### PMU-B

- **Progress Reports:** Recommended adding specific questions in the progress reports to collect ongoing impact data.
- **Trend Identification:** Suggested that these questions should help project teams identify trends and impacts during and after project completion.

#### DOST-PCIEERD

- **Impact Statements:** Proposed that researchers be required to include impact statements in their project proposals.
- **Guidance for Assessments:** This will guide future assessments and ensure that the anticipated outcomes are clearly stated from the outset.

#### AMED

- **Evaluation Criteria:** Suggested examining the relationship between the criteria used for evaluating project proposals and the measurements of impact assessment.
- **Framework Development:** Advocated for the development of a framework that connects evaluation criteria—such as contributions to social and technological advancement—to the metrics used to assess impact, thereby reinforcing the program’s overall objectives.

#### NIAID

- **Potential Impact:** Suggested incorporating potential impact as an additional evaluation criterion within the e-ASIA project framework.
- **Baseline Information:** This approach would allow for the collection of baseline information about impacts, similar to what is done in national evaluations, and would ensure that impact is a considered aspect of project assessments.

#### JST

- **Specific Impacts:** Supported the practicality of the previous suggestions but emphasized the need for a clear definition of the specific impacts to be measured.
- **Integration into Criteria:** Stressed the importance of integrating these definitions into future evaluation criteria, suggesting that this should be a focus for subsequent project calls.

### Conclusion of the Discussion

In conclusion, the discussion highlighted the importance of effectively assessing the impact of the e-ASIA Joint Research Program. MOs emphasized the need for ongoing data collection during and after project implementation, as well as the incorporation of impact statements in project proposals. There was a consensus on the necessity for collaboration among the working group to enhance the assessment process. Additionally, integrating impact-related criteria into evaluations was seen as crucial for capturing meaningful outcomes. Overall, MOs expressed a commitment to refining the impact assessment framework to better reflect the program's contributions over time.

## SESSION 4: REFINING ELIGIBILITY AND REQUIREMENT

**Time Period:** 10:45 - 12:05

**Moderator:** Ms. Emi Kaneko, e-ASIA Secretariat

**Presenter:** Dr. Yukio Kemmochi, e-ASIA Secretariat

- In Session 4, Ms. Emi Kaneko Introduced the purpose of this session, which is to refine eligibility and requirements for the Call for Proposals, based on observations from the previous round. The discussion aims to gather input on the significance of eligibility, enhancing clarity, common issues, overall eligibility results, researcher challenges, and suggestions for simplifying application processes.

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**Discussion Point:** Refining eligibility and requirements for the Call for Proposals

**Key Message Summary:**

### NHMRC

- **Simplified Review Process:** NHMRC noted that their review process for eligibility was straightforward, identifying issues like failure to submit to NHMRC or missing basic information (e.g., Principal Investigator's nationality) as common causes.
- **Call for Systemic Change:** They expressed a desire to explore ways to reduce ineligibility rates, indicating that the high level of ineligible applications reflects potential issues within the program's design or administration that need to be addressed.

## NIAID

- **Limited Ineligibility Issues:** NIAID reported encountering relatively few ineligibility issues but acknowledged challenges with U.S. federal employees who cannot receive new funding, which can complicate collaboration.
- **Future Research Scope:** As NIAID considers expanding research areas beyond infectious diseases and immunology, they expressed concerns about potential eligibility challenges arising from these changes.
- **Enhanced Communication Needs:** NIAID stressed the importance of improving communication among research partners and suggested that contact points within funding agencies could remind Principal Investigators (PIs) to verify their partners' eligibility requirements.

## DOST

- **Budgetary Constraints and Timelines:** DOST explained that each member organization operates under distinct timelines and budgetary requirements set by national budget agencies, which influences submission processes.
- **Online Submission Transition:** They noted the shift to an online proposal submission system but pointed out that last-minute submissions create congestion and complications in the process.
- **Researcher Responsibility:** DOST emphasized that researchers must understand and adhere to funding requirements, suggesting that seasoned researchers should proactively seek out counterpart researchers and be aware of submission timelines.

## AMED

- **Misunderstanding of Submission Processes:** Identified misunderstandings among researchers about the necessity of submitting proposals to both the e-ASIA Secretariat and their national systems, contributing to high ineligibility rates.
- **Proposed Solutions:** They suggested creating a one-page flowchart to clarify the application process, ensuring that all member organizations present consistent information to applicants.
- **Clarity in Communication:** AMED highlighted the need for clearer messaging on eligibility requirements and acknowledged ongoing efforts to improve this aspect in future calls for proposals.

## e-ASIA Secretariat

- **Communication Gaps Within Teams:** Noted a lack of communication within research teams, particularly about eligibility requirements from partner organizations, stressing the importance of coordination among all team members.

- **Implementation of Checklists:** In response to ineligibility issues, the e-ASIA Secretariat introduced checklists to guide applicants, but a substantial number of applications still remained ineligible, indicating a need for further improvements.
- **Commitment to Improvement:** Expressed a dedication to enhancing clarity in the application process and suggested continued collaboration among member organizations to share best practices for communicating eligibility requirements.

### Conclusion of the Discussion Point

In conclusion, the MOs highlighted concerns over the systemic issues, communication gaps, and the need for clearer guidance for researchers. They emphasized the importance of proactive engagement from both funding agencies and applicants to improve understanding of eligibility requirements and streamline the application process, with a commitment to collaboratively enhance future submissions.

## SESSION 5: PROMOTING COLLABORATION IN THE APPLICATION PROCESS

**Time Period:** 13:20 - 14:20

**Moderator:** *Dr. Yukio Kemmochi, e-ASIA Secretariat*

### Agenda 1: Leveraging Workshop

**Discussion Point 1.1:** Timing of the Call Promotion Workshop

**Key Message Summary:**

**e-ASIA Secretariat:**

- **Purpose of the Workshop:** The focus was on enhancing collaboration during the research application process via workshops. These workshops are essential to guide researchers and applicants through the application process, clarify guidelines, and encourage international collaboration.

**NHMRC**

- **Engagement Timing:** Engagement activities in January are generally avoided in Australia due to limited accessibility during the Southern Hemisphere summer. The NHMRC preferred scheduling the workshop in early February rather than January.
- **Preparation Emphasis:** They emphasized that the workshop should not be the starting point for proposal preparation; instead, researchers should already have substantial content developed before the workshop.
- **Communication Timing:** Additionally, communication about the call should occur sooner when it opens.

**BRIN**

- **Workshop Proposal:** It was proposed that the workshop be held in January, either mid or late, to allow two to three months for proposal preparation before the application closing date.
- **National Workshops:** BRIN also mentioned possibly scheduling national workshops for e-ASIA or special calls in Indonesia.

#### PMU-B

- **Proposal Completion:** PMU-B emphasized that researchers should ideally have at least half of their proposals completed before the workshop.
- **Timeline Flexibility:** This preparation would enable team discussions and clarifications. They indicated that either January or February is acceptable given the timeline before the end of March submission.

#### NRCT

- **Workshop Timing Options:** NRCT proposed two options for workshop timing: holding it before the call to facilitate networking among researchers or after the call to address specific questions.

#### NIAID

- **Workshop Purpose:** NIAID pointed out the discussion around two different purposes for the workshop: explaining the call and providing networking opportunities.
- **Networking Considerations:** They noted that if networking is a goal, it may be too late to address this in January or February and recommended linking networking opportunities to other regional conferences.

#### JST

- **Timing Acceptance:** JST stated that either January or February is acceptable for the workshop but emphasized the need for adequate preparation time, ideally one to two months.
- **Preliminary Workshop Suggestion:** They suggested that if the goal is to develop researcher networks, an earlier preliminary workshop might be more effective.

#### e-ASIA Secretariat

- **Workshop Utilization:** The Secretariat highlighted that the workshop should be utilized to ensure potential applicants clearly understand the call for proposals and further develop their research proposals, rather than starting from scratch.
- **Communication Expansion:** They also suggested considering the use of other conferences—not just e-ASIA—for promoting the program and facilitating communication.

### Conclusion of the Discussion Point 1.1

In conclusion, the discussion highlighted the importance of timing and purpose for the upcoming workshop, with a consensus favoring early February over January to maximize researcher accessibility and engagement. While the workshop should serve to clarify the call for proposals and assist with proposal development, participants emphasized the need for adequate preparation time and suggested exploring additional networking opportunities through other conferences. Overall, the focus remains on ensuring that researchers are well-prepared and informed as they approach the proposal submission deadline.

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### Discussion Point 1.2: Preferred Format for Upcoming Workshop

#### Key Message Summary:

#### NHMRC

- **Preannouncement Release:** They suggested releasing preliminary information about the call earlier to provide high-level details and facilitate advertising and collaboration before finalizing the call topics.
- **Workshop Proposal:** NHMRC notes that a workshop for applicants would be more useful if held before the call for proposals opens. Other MOs added that workshops can function as matchmaking events, allowing researchers to connect with potential partners from other countries.
- **Information Sharing:** They emphasized the need for this information to be shared as soon as possible after the meeting.

#### e-ASIA Secretariat

- **Timeline Alignment:** Highlighted the importance of aligning the timeline for the entire process, reiterating the need for MOs to confirm their commitment to jointly launch the call by mid-November.
- **Provisional Information Requirement:** They noted that the combination of participating member countries is essential for issuing any provisional information, including during the matchmaking event prior to the official launch.

#### AMED

- **Concerns About Approvals:** Expressed concerns about the varying timelines among MOs in securing approvals from executives or ministries to open the call.
- **Caution on Announcements:** They cautioned that making provisional announcements before obtaining the necessary authorizations could be problematic and would depend on each MO's schedule.



**NHMRC (Follow-Up)**

- **Communication Agreement:** Reinforced that MOs need to agree on the ability to release communications before final approvals.
- **Approval Process Insight:** From an Australian perspective, they cannot announce opportunities without going through a series of approval steps.
- **Provisional Communication Suggestion:** However, they mentioned the possibility of issuing a provisional, non-binding communication to indicate preparations, emphasizing the importance of finding a workable solution for all MOs involved.

**Conclusion of the Discussion Point 1.2**

In conclusion, the discussion emphasized the potential for a matchmaking networking workshop prior to the call for proposals, with a strong call for releasing preliminary information to facilitate early collaboration. However, concerns were raised regarding the varying timelines for obtaining necessary approvals among member organizations. It was agreed that any communication must align with these timelines to ensure clarity and effectiveness, highlighting the need for a coordinated approach that accommodates the approval processes of all involved parties.

Furthermore, mode of organizing was another concerning issue. While online workshops have been successful, there is a strong desire to return to in-person events or adopt a hybrid format. The participants emphasized that in-person workshops enhance networking and collaboration. However, a hybrid model was proposed, enabling researchers who cannot travel to participate remotely while still providing opportunities for face-to-face interaction for those who can attend in person.

**Discussion Point 1.3: Participation and Feasibility of Pre-launch Matchmaking Event****Key Message Summary:****AMED**

- **Pre-Announcement Capability:** Confirmed that they can make a pre-announcement of the call before full authorization from their executive board, depending on the level of detail in the provisional announcement.
- **Information Compilation Suggestion:** They suggested compiling conditions regarding the type of information that can be released.

**e-ASIA Secretariat**

- **Provisional Information Details:** Suggested that the provisional information could be simple, including the list of participating countries, call topics, and a broad timeline for the launch, with a target opening in mid-December and closing at the end of March.

- **Essential Communication:** They emphasized that this basic information is essential for effective communication.

#### NHMRC

- **Provisional Announcement Flexibility:** Expressed that they can also release provisional announcements anytime, based on the basic information mentioned, including rough dates, known participating countries, and core topics.

#### NIAID

- **Support for Provisional Guidance:** Indicated that they have no issues with releasing provisional guidance after this meeting.

#### BRIN

- **Matchmaking Event Support:** Supported the idea of a matchmaking event before the call announcement to help their prospective applicants find potential partners for proposal preparation.
- **Partnership Platform Mention:** They mentioned having a platform for connecting Indonesian partners with others in e-ASIA.

#### JST

- **No Objections:** Stated that there is no objection from their side regarding the discussions.

#### e-ASIA Secretariat (Follow-Up)

- **International Collaborator Inquiry:** Acknowledged a common inquiry about how to find international collaborators and proposed working on the matchmaking workshop, targeting its launch at the end of November to address this need effectively.

#### Conclusion of the Discussion Point 1.3

In conclusion, there is strong consensus among the organizations regarding the feasibility of releasing provisional information about the call for proposals, with several organizations indicating readiness to issue pre-announcements based on basic details. The discussion also highlighted the importance of organizing a matchmaking workshop to facilitate international collaboration, addressing a common inquiry about finding partners. Plans for the workshop are set to target the end of November, aiming to enhance networking opportunities among member organizations.

Furthermore, it was suggested that matchmaking events could be aligned with major conferences in relevant fields, such as disaster management and health, where researchers are already assembled. This approach could facilitate a more natural formation of international research teams.

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## Agenda 2: Support for In-Kind Participating Researchers

### Discussion Point 2.1: Availability and Validity of In-kind Support Resources for Researchers

#### Key Message Summary:

##### e-ASIA Secretariat:

- **Context:** Some researchers engage in projects through in-kind contributions, relying on existing resources or infrastructure without direct funding from an MO.
- **Challenge:** It is essential to ensure that these researchers have adequate resources to effectively contribute to projects. A key concern raised was whether they truly have access to the necessary resources.

##### NHMRC

- **Understanding In-Kind Support:** Expressed the importance of understanding what constitutes in-kind support. They noted that while NHMRC awards grants to Australian institutions, they can fund international collaboration through research support staff and resources.
- **Interest in Enhancing Collaborations:** NHMRC is interested in how in-kind participation from other member countries enhances collaborations beyond their current funding capabilities.

##### DOST-PCIEERD

- **Restructuring Existing Projects:** Highlighted that in-kind participation involves restructuring existing projects rather than providing new funding.
- **Budget Modifications Required:** They mentioned that if researchers want to join a joint research effort, they must modify their budgets and work plans to accommodate this participation, which does not include fresh funding.

##### BRIN

- **Types of In-Kind Contributions:** Identified several types of in-kind contributions, including project commitment, researcher mobility (inviting partners to Indonesia), and free access to research infrastructure, or researchers can participate in e-ASIA projects if they have demonstrated strong performance in the first year of the project.
- **Funding Management:** They emphasized that funding is not directly transferred to researchers but is instead managed through these in-kind contributions.

##### NIAID

- **National Appendix Listings:** Explained that in-kind contributions are listed in their national appendix.

- **Budget Flexibility:** They provide the flexibility for collaborators to utilize some or all of their budget to support partnerships. For instance, last year, NIAID was able to assist a Cambodian principal investigator by covering part of their budget to facilitate collaboration.
- **Commitment to Effective Support:** NIAID is committed to continuing this practice, allowing for effective in-kind support while ensuring resources are utilized efficiently.

#### PMU-B

- **Consultation with Principal Investigators:** Underscored the need to consult their principal investigators about available internal funding.
- **Encouraging Efficient Funding Strategies:** They highlighted the efficiency of Thai researchers in securing budgets from multiple sources and encouraged them to optimize their funding strategy without duplicating efforts.

#### Conclusion of the Discussion Point 2.1

In conclusion, the discussion highlighted various approaches to in-kind contributions among member organizations, emphasizing the importance of flexibility and collaboration. Each organization outlined its capacity to support joint research efforts, whether through budget reallocations, resource sharing, or facilitating partnerships. This collective effort aims to enhance collaborative research while ensuring that resources are effectively utilized across participating countries.

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### Agenda 3: Refining Proposal Calls for Enhanced Focus and Success Rates

#### Discussion Point 3.1: Proposal Scope Optimization

##### Key Message Summary:

#### DOST

- **Narrowing Proposal Focus:** Emphasized the need to narrow the focus of calls for proposals to specific priority areas. They noted that while many proposals can be submitted under broad topics, this often leads to tremendous submissions, making it difficult to select the best projects. By narrowing the focus, the number of proposals could be reduced, allowing for a higher success rate and more focused reviews.
- **Improving Quality:** By prioritizing specific issues, DOST believes they can reduce the number of proposals for review and improve the quality of funded projects, avoiding false hopes for researchers. Fewer proposals would allow for deeper, more thorough evaluations of each submission and give more researchers a better chance of being funded.

## NHMRC

- **Complexity of Peer Review:** Acknowledged the complexity of managing multiple peer review processes and expressed concern that overly narrowing the call topics could limit the number of fundable applications, potentially leading to unspent funds by the MOs. For example, in the health sector, out of 52 eligible applications, 11 were deemed fundable, with plans to fund six. Narrowing the scope could result in fewer applications, potentially leaving the program with too few high-quality proposals and risking the full utilization of available funding.
- **Encouraging Diverse Participation:** They stressed the importance of encouraging diverse participation to ensure sufficient eligible applications for funding. Concerning narrowing the scope too much could exclude innovative or cross-disciplinary research that may not align perfectly with a specific subtopic but could still hold significant value.

## JST

- **Agreement on Broad Topics:** JST has focused on two key fields: alternative energy and agriculture, deciding to support most submitted proposals based on their eligibility. However, it has been observed that some Member Organizations (MOs) have set a maximum target of three projects but can only support two. If the criteria are further narrowed, some MOs may be unable to fund any projects, which would prevent their participation in the upcoming Call for Proposals. In health research, several proposals are expected, while other fields have not received many applications. Therefore, it is advisable not to further restrict the scope of research topics.

## NIAID

- **Caution Against Restrictiveness:** Cautioned against narrowing the proposal scope too much, as this could severely limit funding opportunities.
- **Impact of Scope on Support:** They noted that this year experience showed that if the scope is too restrictive, they may not be able to support any applications at all.

## e-ASIA Secretariat

- **Goal of Inclusivity:** Emphasized the need to keep the program inclusive, encouraging participation from as many MOs as possible. However, they also aimed to avoid creating a highly competitive environment which could discourage researchers. Restated the goal of inclusivity in the e-ASIA JRP and emphasized the need to balance the competitiveness of the funding program.

However, more focused calls could lead to higher success rates, making the application process more encouraging for researchers. Conversely, broader calls promote greater diversity and increase the likelihood of incorporating research from various sectors and countries.

- **Addressing Low Success Rates:** They expressed concern about the low chances of success for applicants and suggested that this issue needs to be addressed to encourage more participation.

### Conclusion of the Discussion Point 3.1

In conclusion, the discussion emphasized the need to balance narrowing proposal topics to improve focus and success rates while maintaining broad scopes to ensure participation. While targeting specific issues could enhance project quality, overly restrictive scopes may limit funding opportunities and participation. Finding this balance is crucial for the success of the e-ASIA JRP.

## VOTING SESSION

**Time Period:** 14:50 - 15:20

**Moderator:** Ms. Emi Kaneko, e-ASIA Secretariat

**Session Chair:** Ms. Lê Thị Việt Lâm, MOST, Vietnam

During the ABM 2024, members voted on the following agendas:

### Agenda 1: Annual Activity Report/Program Statutes

- The annual activity report and program statutes were unanimously approved, with a minor amendment requested by AMED to correct the name of the Laos PI for the project “Eliminating *S. mekongi* – The Final Push” and the funding agency for “Coastal Ecosystems as Nature Climate solution in Asia.” The revised report is attached as Attachment B.

### Agenda 2: Research Fields, MMOs, Timeline

- Members unanimously approved the research fields (Health, Disaster Risk Reduction and Management and Alternative Energy), MMOs, and timeline for the 14th Call without any amendments.

### Agenda 3: Successful Projects from the 13th Call

- Members unanimously voted to approve five successful projects in Health with no amendments: HE1311, HE1312, HE1317, HE1322, and HE1342.
- Members unanimously voted to approve two successful projects in Alternative Energy with no amendments: AE1304 and AE1326.
- Members unanimously voted to approve three successful projects in Food and Health with no amendments: FH1302, FH1303, and FH1307.
- Members unanimously voted to approve two successful projects in Agriculture with no amendments: AG1301 and AG1310.

### Agenda 4: On-hold Projects from the 13th Call

- e-ASIA Secretariat will confirm the projects’ viability with the Lead PI of each on-hold project based on the priority of score ranking.

1) Health: HE1302 and HE1324

- 2) Alternative Energy: AE1314 and AE1325
- 3) Food and Health: FH1310
- 4) Agriculture: AG1302

The approval process in an ad hoc board meeting will proceed once confirmation is received from the Lead PIs.

## CLOSING SESSION

**Time Period:** 15:20 - 16:00

**Moderator:** Ms. Emi Kaneko, e-ASIA Secretariat

### Acknowledgment of Support

- Ms. Emi Kaneko from the e-ASIA Secretariat opened the closing session by thanking participants and recognizing the contributions of the Vietnamese Ministry of Science and Technology (MOST). She reflected on her earlier communications with Ms. Lam regarding hosting the annual board meeting, highlighting the challenges faced during the pandemic that led to Australia hosting the 2023 meeting. Ms. Kaneko expressed gratitude for Vietnam's support in making this year's event possible.

### Announcement of Next Annual Board Meeting

- Ms. Kaneko invited Dr. Socheat Keo from Ministry of Industry, Science, Technology and Innovation (MISTI) Cambodia to introduce himself as the host for the next annual board meeting in 2025. Dr. Keo expressed his excitement about Cambodia's upcoming role and thanked Vietnam for organizing this year's successful event. He emphasized the plans to focus on technology and innovation to drive sustainable growth and regional cooperation.

### Further Acknowledgments

- Ms. Kaneko also extended her thanks to Thailand's NSTDA for hosting the e-ASIA Program Secretariat, acknowledging their continuous support which has been vital for the operations based at Thailand Science Park.

### Closing Remarks by Ms. Lê Thị Việt Lâm

- Ms. Lê Thị Việt Lâm from MOST, Vietnam, concluded the session by thanking all participants for their contributions. She expressed her appreciation for the e-ASIA Secretariat and JST's support, congratulated Cambodia on its upcoming hosting duties, and looked forward to the next meeting in Phnom Penh. She wished everyone a pleasant stay in Hanoi and success in their endeavors.

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The meeting closed at 16:00 (UTC+7).

## PARTICIPANT LIST IN ABM 2024

1. Dr. Nicholas Johnson	<i>NHMRC, Australia</i>
2. Dr. Patricia Ridgway	<i>NHMRC, Australia</i>
3. Ms. Kirilly Agnew	<i>NHMRC, Australia</i>
4. Ms. Jane Lofts	<i>NHMRC, Australia</i>
5. Ms. Lauren Luijerink	<i>NHMRC, Australia</i>
6. Dr. Socheat Keo	<i>MISTI, Cambodia</i>
7. Ms. Sdok Soksreymeng	<i>MISTI, Cambodia</i>
8. Dr. Chinda Chhe	<i>MISTI, Cambodia</i>
9. Prof. Agus Haryono	<i>BRIN, Indonesia</i>
10. Dr. Adrin Tohari	<i>BRIN, Indonesia</i>
11. Mr. Shinsuke Okada	<i>MEXT, Japan</i>
12. Dr. Masae Sugawara	<i>JST, Japan</i>
13. Dr. Takumi Katsumata	<i>JST, Japan</i>
14. Prof. Makie Kokubun	<i>JST, Japan</i>
15. Ms. Wakana Yamanaka	<i>JST, Japan</i>
16. Mr. Shinji Otsuka	<i>JST, Japan</i>
17. Ms. Satoko Takei	<i>JST, Japan</i>
18. Dr. Yasushi Ogasaka	<i>AMED, Japan</i>
19. Dr. Kyosuke Haze	<i>AMED, Japan</i>
20. Mr. Takashi Hotta	<i>AMED, Japan</i>
21. Ms. Nor Syamsida Binti Ismail	<i>MOSTI, Malaysia</i>
22. Ms. Wan Shafiqah Shaherra Binti Wan Khalid	<i>MOSTI, Malaysia</i>
23. Dr. Cho Cho Lwin	<i>MOST, Myanmar</i>
24. Dr. Kieran Knight	<i>MBIE, New Zealand</i>
25. Dr. Damian Carder	<i>MBIE, New Zealand</i>
26. Dr. Leah J. Buendia	<i>DOST, The Philippines</i>
27. Ms. Charlene U. Basig	<i>DOST, The Philippines</i>
28. Dr. Enrico C. Paringit	<i>DOST-PCIEERD, The Philippines</i>
29. Ms. Grace F. Estillore	<i>DOST-PCIEERD, The Philippines</i>
30. Ms. Hannah Marie T. Mejia	<i>DOST-PCIEERD, The Philippines</i>
31. Ms. Sheralaine Briones	<i>DOST-PCIEERD, The Philippines</i>
32. Ms. Camil Lontoc	<i>DOST-PCIEERD, The Philippines</i>
33. Mr. Sergey Konovalov	<i>RSF, Russia</i>
34. Mr. Ek Siang Oeij	<i>A*STAR, Singapore</i>
35. Ms. Kwansiri Chonyuth	<i>NRCT, Thailand</i>
36. Ms. Ruksina Jiravichailit	<i>NRCT, Thailand</i>
37. Ms. Niramon Chaiprikjarean	<i>NRCT, Thailand</i>
38. Ms. Pattranit Vijitchairach	<i>NRCT, Thailand</i>
39. Ms. Chontida Tangnara	<i>NRCT, Thailand</i>
40. Ms. Supapich Nunart	<i>NRCT, Thailand</i>
41. Dr. Qwanrudee Chotichanathawewong	<i>NRCT, Thailand</i>
42. Ms. Sronkanok Tangjaijit	<i>NSTDA, Thailand</i>



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|-------------------------------|--|
| 43. Ms. Mulika Kulsiripruck   | <i>NSTDA, Thailand</i>                 |
| 44. Dr. Pavadee Aungkavattana | <i>PMU-B, Thailand</i>                 |
| 45. Dr. Sonthaya Chairwut     | <i>PMU-B, Thailand</i>                 |
| 46. Ms. Candice Beaubien      | <i>NIAID, United States of America</i> |
| 47. Ms. Joyelle Dominique     | <i>NIAID, United States of America</i> |
| 48. Ms. Lê Thị Việt Lâm       | <i>MOST, Vietnam</i>                   |
| 49. Ms. Trịnh Quỳnh Trang     | <i>MOST, Vietnam</i>                   |
| 50. Ms. Emi Kaneko            | <i>e-ASIA JRP Secretariat</i>          |
| 51. Dr. Yukio Kemmochi        | <i>e-ASIA JRP Secretariat</i>          |
| 52. Ms. Kullanan Sukwanchai   | <i>e-ASIA JRP Secretariat</i>          |