

Mekong Thought Leadership and Think Tanks Network Program

Open: 1-Year Fellowship | Call for 2nd Batch Applications

The Mekong Thought Leadership and Think Tanks Network Program provides fellowship opportunities hosted in **Cambodia, Lao PDR, Thailand, and Vietnam**. The Program will award up to 13 high-quality **entry- or mid-level professionals** of all genders who are **Mekong citizens** (Cambodia, Lao PDR, Thailand, Vietnam) with research, policy, and/or practitioner experience in water, energy, and climate sectors. One fellowship grant is for approximately **USD 16,000 (AUD 25,000)** for a 12-month fellowship full-time or a maximum of 17 months part-time to end by June 2025. Individuals from diverse gender backgrounds, indigenous groups, and persons with disabilities are especially encouraged to apply.

Launch of the Call: 6 September 2023

Application deadline: 30 September 2023, 23:59 (Bangkok/Indochina time)

Submissions of applications will only be accepted through the online submission platform:

<https://sei.submittable.com/submit/271138/mekong-thought-leadership-and-think-tanks-network-mtt-program-call-for-fellows>

1. Background

The Mekong Thought Leadership and Think Tanks Network Program, supported by Australia's Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT), aims to work with national and regional knowledge-based policy influence organizations (KBPIOs)¹ in the Mekong Region to enhance their capacities to engage stakeholders involved in policy processes effectively. In particular, the program will work with KBPIOs to support strengthening policy and practice concerning equitable water security, energy security, climate change mitigation, and adaptation. This will be combined with communications based on high-quality research, practical advice generated by the program, and cross-learning among relevant regional organizations.

The program views that investing in diverse entry- or mid-level professionals of all genders working in research and policy engagement is essential to enhance their capacity to produce and promote practical and sustainable solutions. The program will spearhead capacity building for entry- or mid-level professionals through fellowships and trainings.

The first round of fellowships, launched in April 2023, successfully awarded seven fellows. This call seeks to recruit at least 13 high-quality fellows who will undertake the activities outlined in the sections below.

¹ Wellstead, A.M. and Howlett, M. 2022. (Re)Thinking think tanks in the age of policy labs: The rise of knowledge-based policy influence organisations. Aust. J. Publ. Admin. 81: 224-232.

2. Objectives of the fellowship program

1. Strengthen the knowledge, capacity, and skills of diverse Mekong entry- or mid-level professionals of all genders in policy research, engagement, and communication, as well as effectively integrate gender equity and social inclusion within each of these.
2. Support the implementation of the program in enhancing effectiveness and inclusiveness of policy engagement at the intersections of water security, energy security, and climate change mitigation and adaptation, as well as in the crosscutting dimension of gender equality and social inclusion across these domains.
3. Provide opportunities for diverse entry- or mid-level professionals of all genders to increase their networking with other professionals across sectors, especially water, energy, climate change, and gender and social inclusion, across the Mekong subregion.

3. Fellow Criteria

This call seeks to attract at least 13 high-quality entry-level- or mid-level professionals. Individuals from diverse gender backgrounds, indigenous groups, and persons with disabilities are especially encouraged to apply.

4. Fellow Qualifications

Required:

1. Entry- or mid-level professionals of all ages and genders.
2. Citizen of Cambodia, Lao PDR, Thailand, or Vietnam.
3. Education qualification as appropriate for the role, but preference for:
 - a. Master's degree with at least two years' experience or
 - b. Bachelor's degree with at least five years' experience.
4. Available to commit to a 12-month fellowship full-time or a maximum of 17 months part-time to end no later than June 2025.
5. Be physically based in the same city with a host institution (that you are currently not employed by) for at least six months during the fellowship period. For exceptional circumstances, other arrangements may be negotiated upon request and subject to approval by SEI (Program Secretariat).

Preferable:

1. Experience in working in at least one of the thematic areas:
 - a. Water security
 - b. Energy security
 - c. Climate change mitigation or adaptation
 - d. Gender equality, disability, and social inclusion
 - e. Water, energy, and climate nexus
2. Applicants currently employed by or affiliated with a program partner (see Annex 1) are invited to apply to be hosted by other partner organizations of the program or other KBPIOs in the region. Please note that the fellow cannot be hosted by their *existing* employer.

5. Tasks

General:

1. Attend meetings and relevant events organized by the program.
2. Engage with partners and other fellows in the program.
3. Report on the progress of the fellowship.
4. Actively engage with SUMERNET Young Professionals (SYP), a youth network under the Sustainable Mekong Research Network (SUMERNET) that aims to inform and engage young professionals who are passionate about a just and sustainable future.
5. Engage in outreach activities of the program.
6. Engage in activities depending on available time and common interest of the fellow, mentor, and host institution.

Specific:

The specific tasks of the fellowship will be agreed upon between the fellow, their respective mentor, and the host institution. It will include, but not be limited to, research, communications, and policy engagement.

6. Hosting Options

Each fellow will be hosted by a reputable organization in the Mekong Region. The host organization will provide a mentor who will guide and engage directly with the fellow and provide supporting links to the wider Program activities and opportunities. To accommodate the diverse interests and learning experiences of potential fellows, there are **five hosting options** to select from. Based on the fellow's hosting preference, the capacity of hosting institutes, and the needs of the Program, the Program will match the fellow's interest with a suitable host.

1. **Hosted by a member of a Flagship Research Study.** Flagship Studies aim to enhance evidence-based understanding of the Water-Energy-Climate (WEC) nexus, including through the lens of gender and social equity.
2. **Hosted by a member of a Rapid Response Project.** Rapid Response Projects aim to support focused interdisciplinary projects that seek practical solutions to urgent or emerging challenges in the Water-Energy-Climate (WEC) nexus.
3. **Hosted by a Program partner.** See Annex 1 for the full list.
4. **Hosted by a GEDSI-focused organization.** Fellows may be hosted by a participating organization with a strong GEDSI focus on the Mekong Region.
5. **Hosted by a KBPIO.** Fellows may be hosted by a KBPIO that works on water, energy, and climate issues in the Mekong Region and has the capacity and interest to host a fellow.

Available positions are subject to participating study/project/partner/organization. For more information about the Flagship Research Study and Rapid Response Project, see the call page [here](#). Topics of study/project are subject to awarded proposals (to be announced in late 2023). The fellows' role will be determined by the host organization, in conjunction with the fellow, and will include work related to the study/project/partner/organization and contribute to the wider Program.

7. Duration

The duration of this fellowship is 12 months full-time or its equivalent on a part-time basis (maximum 17 months) to end by June 2025. Changes to the fellowship duration will be based on evaluating the

fellow's work and with the agreement of all parties concerned, including fellow, mentor, and host institution.

8. Benefits and Allowance

Highlighted Benefits:

1. An unique opportunity to be mentored by senior experts in various fields of research, policy, and practice relating to issues of water, energy, and climate.
2. Be part of an interdisciplinary and international program that includes partners in Cambodia, Lao PDR, Thailand, Vietnam, Australia, and beyond.
3. Have access to capacity-building activities within the program and those organized by partner organizations.
4. The opportunity to participate in program regional forums or other activities in the region.
5. Receive an official certificate for successful completion of the fellowship.

Allowance Summary:

One fellowship grant is for a maximum of approximately USD 16,000 (AUD 25,000), covering the following expenditures.

1. One return flight, work permit, and visa for the fellow to be physically placed in the host institution.
2. Travel support for the fellow to join regional fora and other activities.
3. Health and travel insurance.
4. Monthly allowance for the fellow.
5. Accommodation support.
6. Overhead to host institute.
7. Honorarium for mentor of the fellow.

Detailed breakdown of the grant will be finalized between the fellow and host institution according to the Fellowship Grant Guideline, prior to the start of the fellowship period. Arrangements are subject to approval by SEI Asia. The total grant will not exceed approximately USD 16,000 (AUD 25,000) in total.

9. Application Submission

Mandatory:

1. Recent CV/resumé.
2. Motivation letter (500 words maximum). The letter should address the following questions:
 - a. What is your motivation to apply for this fellowship opportunity?
 - b. How is your current work/study relevant to this position?
 - c. What are your expectations/hopes for this position?
 - d. What unique perspective and insights do you bring to this position? (Please address here cultural, minority, gender, etc. issues)
3. At least one reference letter from a current or former work/academic supervisor.

Optional:

1. Relevant samples of work (reports, academic papers, other media outputs, etc.).

Note: Fellows who plan to do a part-time MTT fellowship, and at the same time continue their employment with their current organization during the MTT fellowship period, will need to provide a letter of support from the organization. This can be done after the applicant has been awarded the fellowship.

10. Important Dates

| Step | Date |
|--|-------------------------------|
| 1. Application submission deadline | 30 September 2023 |
| 2. Application review and scheduling interviews | 2-20 October 2023 |
| 3. Panel interview | 23 October - 3 November 2023 |
| 4. Endorsement by Program Steering Committee (PSC) | 27 November - 1 December 2023 |
| 5. Announcement | 4-15 December 2023 |

Subject to restrictions related to the application process of visa and work permit, and other considerations, fellows will start their activities with the host institution as soon as possible, ideally **by January 2024**.

The fellow may initially undertake activities online or remotely, if necessary. The fellowship starting date will be determined taking into consideration the conditions listed above and will last for a period of 12 months for full-time or 17 months for part-time fellowship from the starting date.

11. Contact

For inquiries, please contact Mr. Boripat Lebel, Unit for Social and Environmental Research (USER), Thailand. Email: boripat@sea-user.org.

12. Annexes

Annex 1: List of program partners

1. Stockholm Environment Institute - Asia Centre (SEI Asia), Thailand
2. Unit for Social and Environmental Research (USER), Chiang Mai University, Thailand
3. Centre for Change Governance, University of Canberra, Australia
4. Cambodia Development Resource Institute (CDRI), Cambodia
5. Faculty of Engineering, National University of Laos (NUOL), Lao PDR
6. Thailand Environment Institute (TEI), Thailand
7. Institute of Policy and Management (IPAM), Vietnam
8. International Water Centre Alumni Network (IWCAN), Australia
9. University of New South Wales (Canberra) (UNSW), Australia
10. Inland Fisheries Research and Development Institute (IFReDI), Cambodia
11. Institute of Technology of Cambodia (ITC), Cambodia
12. Department of Environmental Science, Royal University of Phnom Penh (RUPP), Cambodia
13. National Agriculture and Forestry Research Institute (NAFRI), Lao PDR
14. Northern Agriculture and Forestry College (NAFC), Lao PDR
15. National Economic Research Institute (NERI), Lao PDR
16. GMS Research Center for Environment and Sustainability, Mahasarakham University, Thailand

17. School of Public Policy, Chiang Mai University (CMU), Thailand
18. Mae Fah Luang University (MFU), Thailand
19. Asian Institute of Technology (AIT), Thailand
20. Chulalongkorn University (CU), Thailand
21. Viet Nam National Mekong Committee (VNMC), Vietnam
22. Western Highlands Agriculture and Forestry Science Institute (WASI), Vietnam
23. Viet Insight, Vietnam
24. WWF Regional, Asia Pacific
25. Mekong River Commission Secretariat (MRCS)