

# WHAT TO CONSIDER

## WHEN LAUNCHING A DANIDA NATIONAL ALUMNI NETWORK

A Danida National Alumni Network can be a fantastic opportunity for Danida fellows to keep in touch, form new partnerships, share their knowledge and collaborate around new solutions in their sector or country – and maintain a link with Denmark. The networks and their members also have access to a variety of opportunities through the Danida Fellowship Centre NextStepNetworking facility.

**Before launching a network, there are some things you should consider:**

- **WHAT IS THE PURPOSE OF THE NETWORK?** What would the network help achieve and why is there a need for it? Is it possible to formulate a mission statement?
- **WOULD THE NETWORK HAVE A SPECIFIC THEMATIC FOCUS?** Would the network gather people around a specific thematic focus such as green transition, sustainable energy solutions, health issues or food safety? Or would it have a more generic focus?
- **WHO SHOULD BE MEMBERS?** Should the network be for alumni working in a particular field only, all Danida alumni or perhaps even all alumni from courses and studies in Denmark whether financed through Danida or not? Danida Fellowship Centre can provide you with information on existing alumni.
- **WHAT WOULD MAKE THE MEMBERS ENGAGE IN THE NETWORK?** How should the network work and what should it offer for members to be interested to join and continue to participate in network activities? It would be a good idea to map the interest of potential members before you launch.
- **WHAT ACTIVITIES SHOULD THE NETWORK OFFER?** Would the network mainly offer social gatherings, events with a professional focus, or both? Again, the interest of the members is key in answering this question.
- **HOW SHOULD THE NETWORK BE COORDINATED/FACILITATED?** Will there be a named coordinator and would he/she be elected by the members? Will the network have a coordinating group and how would they be elected/selected?
- **WHAT ROLE WILL THE EMBASSY PLAY?** Will the Danish embassy in the country play a role in supporting the network and how?
- **HOW WOULD THE NETWORK COMMUNICATE?** Would communication primarily be via mail or would the network have its own Facebook, WhatsApp group or similar? How will you ensure your member lists are updated?
- **HOW SHOULD THE NETWORK BE BRANDED?** Should the network have a particular name or logo to inspire members? What would that be? You can use the Danida Fellows Network logo in connection with events and you can use the Danida Fellowship Centre and Danish Ministry of Foreign Affairs banner in formal or official communication - as long as you use the correct formatting and visual identity. Contact us for advice beforehand.
- **WOULD THE NETWORK LINK UP WITH OTHER ACTORS OR NETWORKS IN THE COUNTRY?** Is there scope for collaboration with other networks or organizations in the country? In many countries, there are Danida funded research projects. It could be useful to connect with them for updates on research results as part of network events. Contact Danida Fellowship Centre for information on projects in your country.
- **WHAT REQUIREMENTS DOES DANIDA FELLOWSHIP CENTRE HAVE OF A NATIONAL NETWORK?** If the network wishes to make use of the opportunities offered through DFC's Next Step Networking facility, it must adhere to some basic requirements. Please see the section "What are the Danida alumni networks" below.

**Remember:** A network can take many forms. The most important thing is that the network is relevant to its members and is something they would want to invest their time in.

When launching your network, we would encourage you to discuss the above questions with potential members. You could do so by calling an initial meeting of potential members to do so and explore the interest in establishing the network. Or you could send out a survey to potential members asking for their feedback on all or some of the questions.

**You are always welcome to contact the Danida Fellowship Centre's Network Team at [nextstepnetworking@dfcentre.dk](mailto:nextstepnetworking@dfcentre.dk). We can offer suggestions and advice and can connect you with existing networks for inspiration.**

## WHAT ARE THE DANIDA NATIONAL ALUMNI NETWORKS?

National Alumni Networks support interaction, knowledge sharing and collaboration among Danida alumni in a particular country.<sup>1</sup> In 2022, there were 10 active alumni networks, established on the initiative of one or more alum and often with support from the Danish Embassy.

The alumni themselves, often via a coordinator or coordinating group, run the networks. They provide opportunities for alumni to come together, form new relations, socialize, share knowledge and experiences, and debate the challenges faced by their country. They are also an opportunity for alumni to maintain close ties with Denmark and for the Danish Embassy in the country to maintain ties and build further partnerships with the alumni.

The National Alumni Networks take different forms, depending on the country and context. They are formalized to varying degrees, embassy involvement is not necessarily at the same level and membership criteria differ.

If the network wishes to use the DFC banner or Danida Fellows Network logo or make use of the opportunities under DFC's NextStepNetworking facility, it must adhere to some **basic requirements**: 1) it must adhere to democratic values, 2) there must be a coordinator and a membership of at least 10 alum, 3) it must have established a communication platform (Facebook, WhatsApp, LinkedIn or similar), and 4) it must submit a brief annual report on activities to DFC.

## WHAT DOES A NETWORK DO?

A national network can have a primarily social purpose, it can have a more professional and perhaps even a particular thematic focus, or it can have a bit of everything<sup>2</sup>. It is up to the members to define the purpose of their network. Similarly, the network can meet in many different shapes and forms. Often events are organized in collaboration with the Embassy in country. Danida Fellowship Centre may also provide advice and support.

Not all events need to have a strategic or professional agenda. Sometimes the best ideas and partnerships are realized in an informal setting. Without too much protocol or a rigid agenda, there is often more freedom to make new connections and initiate conversations.

The Vietnam network gathers members for a fun day out racing other alumni teams in the [Hanoi dragon boat race](#).

The Ghana alumni network workshop '[Coconut Waste as a Resource](#)' gathered coconut entrepreneurs and others to discuss coconuts and waste management.

The network can also facilitate professional dialogue, networking and collaboration. Some networks gather around subjects such as food safety or plastic waste for members interested in and with professional knowledge of such issues. Some have sub-groups on such specific thematic areas. A professional focus may motivate members to join and allow them to formulate tangible solutions, identify new ideas and innovation.

Sometimes a big event that attracts a large group of people can boost an alumni network. This could be an annual meeting of network members or an event gathering people from across a sector, both alumni and others.

The Danish Embassy in Mexico talks about the Mexico alumni network: '[Danida alumni are powerful ambassadors for the merits of Danish know-how](#)'.

<sup>1</sup> Some networks also include alumni having completed an education or study in Denmark that was not supported by a Danida fellowship.

<sup>2</sup> A **network** is defined as a set of connections among people. They use their connections and relationships as a resource in order to solve problems, share knowledge and make further connections. A **community** refers to the development of a shared identity around a topic or a set of challenges. It represents a collective intention to steward a domain of knowledge and to sustain learning about it.

## HOW DOES DANIDA FELLOWSHIP CENTRE SUPPORT THE NATIONAL ALUMNI NETWORKS

Danida Fellowship Centre offers advice to networks wishing to improve or expand or for alumni and embassies wishing to launch a new network.

### We help you:

- Obtain information on alumni in your country.
- Obtain information on other alumni networks and their coordinators for inspiration in establishing or revisiting your own network.

Network coordinators will also be invited for workshops facilitated by DFC, where the content is co-created with coordinators and may include skills development, supporting stronger national networks, or strategic discussions on issues relevant to the networks.

**Once a network is established, network members will have access to a number of opportunities under DFC's NextStepNetworking facility.**<sup>3</sup>

They may:

- Participate in INSPIRE Webinars and provide suggestions on relevant themes.
- Approach DFC for support in organizing INSPIRE Debates relevant to their network members, where DFC provides advice or helps facilitate the dialogues, but where the national network will be responsible for formulating content and identifying speakers.
- Access training and workshop under the INSPIRE Learning facility to boost their skills in cross-stakeholder collaboration
- Submit proposals for funding through the Networkers Grant mechanism, which offers grants for events aimed at institutionalizing learning within alumni organisations or at facilitating cross-sector dialogue.
- Co-host Networking Days together with Danida Fellowship Centre and the Danish Embassy to foster cross-sector dialogue and collaboration within or across specific sectors in their country

Contact us at [nextstepnetworking@dfcentre.dk](mailto:nextstepnetworking@dfcentre.dk) for more information or visit us at [www.dfcentre.com/network](http://www.dfcentre.com/network).



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<sup>3</sup> As long as they comply with the basic requirements outlined on page 2.