

## Regional Exchange Promotion Program training in Vietnam and Thailand for local government officials

J.CLAIR Singapore

From 14 August to 24 August 2024 (inclusive of a three-day training program in Japan), J.CLAIR Singapore and the Japan Intercultural Academy of Municipalities (JIAM) jointly conducted the Regional Exchange Promotion Program. Titled “Overseas Strategy of Local Governments ~Promoting Interregional Exchange with Vibrant Asia~”, this year’s program was held in both Vietnam and Thailand.

Nine participants, which included a mix of local government officials and others, participated in the program. The Vietnam segment included visits to local Vietnamese institutions, such as the Hanoi Department of Home Affairs and Lien Viet Educational Center (Hanoi campus), as well as locally based Japanese institutions and companies such as the Embassy of Japan in Vietnam, JETRO and JNTO Hanoi Offices and AKURUHI Supermarket.

For the Thailand segment, participants visited local Thai institutions such as the Bangkok City Hall and Srinakharinwirot University, as well as locally based Japanese institutions and companies such as the Embassy of Japan in Thailand, JETRO and JNTO Bangkok Offices, and Don Don Donki (MBK Centre).

Similar to last year, the training was designed to span two countries to enable participants to better understand the differences across both countries in the areas of tourism to Japan and development of marketing channels. Dialogue sessions and street surveys with locals were also incorporated into the program for participants to experience a genuine local ‘exchange’. Despite the limited time, the participants were able to visit a total of 16 destinations.

### 1 People’s Committee of Hanoi (Vietnam)

The participants visited Vietnam’s capital, Hanoi, which is considered the political and cultural centre of the country. In Hanoi, the participants received a briefing from the Hanoi Department of Home Affairs, the Hanoi Authority of Planning and Investment and the Hanoi Department of Foreign Affairs on the city’s overview, economic situation and international exchange initiatives respectively.

In addition to learning about Vietnam’s national and local government systems and how they differ from Japan’s, the participants also gained insights into Hanoi’s local administrative reforms and focus on digital transformation (DX).

The participants felt that Japan and Vietnam (Hanoi City) face similar challenges in local government administration. During the Q&A dialogue, they asked the Hanoi representatives many questions related to their own work.



Commemorative photo at the Hanoi Department of Home Affairs

## 2 Opinion exchange meeting with JETAA (Vietnam)

The Vietnam JETAA (The Japan Exchange and Teaching Programme Alumni Association) was established in November 2023, and is the fifth JETAA chapter within the jurisdiction of J.CLAIR Singapore.

Providing participants with a local 'exchange' experience is one of the objectives of the training program. To fulfil this, members from the Vietnam JETAA chapter were invited for a dinner and dialogue with the participants. As the JETAA members had previously worked in Japan as CIRs (Coordinator for International Relations), they were able to have meaning conversations with the participants about the differences in culture and lifestyle between Japan and Vietnam.

In addition, the participants had a fruitful exchange of views with the JETAA members using questions that they had prepared in advance in Japan.



Participants asking tourism-related questions to Vietnam JETAA member (foreground)

## 3 JETRO Bangkok Office (Thailand)

At the JETRO Bangkok office, the participants were briefed on JETRO's activities and the economic situation in Thailand.

As the office also has staff dispatched from Japanese local authorities, the participants were given the valuable opportunity to hear about the benefits and challenges of working overseas from the perspective of local government officials based overseas.

A lively exchange of views took place with the participants actively asking questions about the site conditions for Thai companies entering Japan and the level of support available for start-ups.



Participants being briefed on the activities of Japanese companies in Thailand

#### 4 Bangkok City Hall (Thailand)

The participants visited the Bangkok City Hall Administration and Tourism Department, which is located in the government office area of Bangkok.

They were briefed on the department's activities, which not only included direct tourism promotion efforts, but also initiatives that indirectly contribute to tourism promotion, such as support for local community activities and infrastructure development. The participants also asked questions related to 'anime pop-culture tourism' and overtourism. Overall, the visit was a fulfilling one, with a deep exploration of the similarities and differences between Japan and Thailand.



Commemorative photo with participants in front of the Bangkok City Hall

The training provided an opportunity for participants to deepen their knowledge about various initiatives in Vietnam and Thailand, and learn about the differences between Japan and these countries, across a wide range of fields, in both the public and private sectors.

