



Grants call 2021-2022: information for applicants

1. Introduction and overview

As one of the three intergovernmental pillars of the Commonwealth, the Foundation operates within that critical space between government and the people. The Foundation works to bring the voice of civil society into all aspects of governance, supporting civil society engagement in shaping the policies and decisions that affect people's lives.

The Foundation's vision is of a Commonwealth of equal, just, and inclusive societies. Our mission is to contribute to that vision by:

- Supporting the active and constructive participation of Commonwealth citizens in all aspects of their governance
- Nurturing the growth of vibrant and free civil societies in all Commonwealth countries
- Advancing the principles and ideals of the Commonwealth

The Foundation's [Strategic Plan 2021-2026](#) is strongly linked to the [Commonwealth Charter](#) and its values and aspirations. It also seeks to reflect and advance the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), in particular SDGs three, five, and 13-16, including all relevant targets focussing on participation in decision-making at all levels. It identifies three thematic areas of focus: (i) health; (ii) environment and climate change; and (iii) freedom of expression, with gender equality as a cross-cutting theme. Civil society projects that aim to advance these themes will be supported through this call for applications. See section five for further information on our thematic areas.

2. Who is eligible to apply:

Eligibility for grant funding under this call depends on the following criteria:

1. The applicant is a registered not-for-profit civil society organisation (CSO).
2. The applicant is registered in an eligible Commonwealth Foundation member country and the proposed project will be implemented in the country of registration. Please see a full list of eligible countries at commonwealthfoundation.com/grants. (Projects can be implemented in one or more eligible Commonwealth Foundation member countries)

and can have a national, sub-national, regional or international remit). In multi-country projects, the Foundation encourages collaboration with partners in each involved country (see further information on partnerships below).

3. The applicant has documented experience, over at least two years, working on participatory governance and advocacy within the proposed area/theme(s).
4. The total grant amount requested must be between £15,000 and £30,000 per year for a maximum of two years.
5. The requested grant amount should not exceed 70% of the applicant organisation's total annual income.
6. The average of the applicant organisation's total annual income over the past two years must be less than £2m.
7. The project proposal must address at least one of the priority themes and demonstrate appropriate and meaningful integration of gender considerations.

Proposals must relate to projects that are expected to begin within the second half of 2022.

Notes:

- a. The Foundation appreciates that CSOs interested in applying for a grant may already be doing significant work that falls within the parameters of this grants call and that would benefit from support for its expansion and/or continuation. We are therefore happy to consider supporting an additional component or extension of an existing initiative. This should be made clear in the application.
- b. The Foundation is piloting support for the inclusion of a creative element into projects funded under this call. This is an optional element to be funded separately (up to 15% of the total grant awarded). Additional details can be found below.

3. How to apply

Applicants are required to complete an online application form. All applications must include the following additional documentation:

- A logic model and activity timeline (completed using the template provided).

- A copy of the organisation's registration certificate¹. This should be a scan of an official registration document provided by the relevant authorities in the country where the organisation is registered.
- For grants of **£15,000** per annum: a copy of the organisation's most recent audited accounts **or** annual accounts. Note that annual accounts must include a balance sheet, a profit and loss statement and notes about the account. They must be signed off by the organisation's Board or its principal executive officer. Audited or annual accounts must not be older than December 2019.
- For grants of **£15,001 and above**: a copy of the organisation's most recent audited accounts. Note that audited accounts must include both the accounts and the opinion of the external auditor who has certified them. They should not be older than December 2019.²

4. Exclusions

The Commonwealth Foundation will not fund:

- Attendance at training courses, workshops, and conferences unless as part of a larger project funded by the grant.
- Academic study or research unless as part of a larger project funded by the grant.
- Publication of books and films, unless they are part of a larger project applied for under the grant (note that this provision does not apply to a creative element of any grant, as detailed below).
- Exchanges between developed countries.
- Activities that are solely targeted at building the capacity of government officials and/or the private sector. If the project requires activities such as training of government officials, funding for such components should be separately sourced.
- Projects that focus on service delivery (e.g., the Foundation will not fund activities such as the distribution of medicines).

5. Priority themes for this call:

The Foundation is currently focussing its work on three priority themes: (i) health; (ii) environment and climate change; and (iii) freedom of expression. We support initiatives that encourage and lead to meaningful and

¹ Trust deeds will not be accepted in lieu of a registration certificate. Where the original registration certificates are not written in English, shortlisted applications may be asked to provide a translated version.

² Independently verified accounts or project audits will not be accepted in lieu of organisational audited accounts. Audited accounts for an affiliated organisation registered in a different country will not be accepted.

constructive engagement between civil society and government around policy and decision-making relevant to these three themes.

Applications **must address one or more** of the three priority themes. Possible areas of focus within the themes are set out below. Note that this is not an exhaustive list but rather a set of examples to demonstrate the range of possible areas of focus. All applications are required to demonstrate how they intend to integrate gender into their project design and implementation.

Health

Support civil society to engage meaningfully with government on:

- Universal health coverage.
- Realising the right to health: better availability, accessibility, quality, participation and accountability in health services and delivery.
- Programmes and policies that focus on the social determinants of health as part of the inclusive right to health.
- Equitable access to health services for marginalised groups (e.g., migrants) and those with special needs (e.g., people living with HIV or disabilities).
- Promoting the participation of marginalised groups and those with special needs in decision-making processes.
- Promoting health and well-being by combating communicable and non-communicable diseases.
- Equitable access to vaccines and essential medicines.

Freedom of expression

Support civil society to engage meaningfully with government to:

- Advocate for a legal and regulatory environment that protects and upholds freedom of expression for all.
- Advocate for a legal and regulatory environment that promotes the freedom, growth and vibrancy of civil society.
- Promote access to information and transparency in governance, including through a free and independent press, robust freedom of information laws and their practical application.
- Support civil society engagement in national, regional and/or international mechanisms and processes to promote freedom of expression (e.g., national human rights institutions; Universal Periodic Reviews).

Support civil society to work with artists to raise awareness of freedom of expression issues and engage in advocacy efforts (note this could become part of the additional creative element as set out below).

Environment and climate change

Support civil society to engage meaningfully with government to:

- Develop, review, and improve laws, policies and practices aimed at addressing environmental and climate threats.
- Monitor the implementation of relevant laws, policies, and practices (e.g., of national climate plans and commitments).
- Address mitigation and adaptation challenges.
- Support community-level adaptation measures aimed at improving resilience of those most affected (e.g., improving the resilience of market vendors against extreme weather events).
- Expose and address the factors that contribute to the increased vulnerability of social groups to the consequences of environmental degradation and climate change.
- Expose and address negative social and distributional outcomes of climate change mitigation policies and/or encourage the support for the development of pro-poor mitigation approaches.

Thematic and cross-cutting intersections

The Foundation's three themes overlap and connect in myriad ways. For example, freedom of expression and protection of the free flow of information are critical to ensuring meaningful progress on health and climate goals.

Applicants are encouraged to explore the intersections between our three themes when developing their proposals and, where appropriate, to consider addressing more than one.

For example, a project could focus on using freedom of information legislation to ensure access to reliable information on the environment or to promote government accountability in these areas. Another project might focus on the links between climate change and health and how these can be addressed at the national level in ways that make a difference to vulnerable groups.

6. Other important themes and considerations

As detailed below, gender is a cross-cutting theme in our work and must be reflected in submitted applications.

Though applicants are encouraged to reflect on our other strategic concerns where applicable (youth, partnerships, and small and vulnerable states), this is not an essential requirement.

Gender as a cross-cutting theme

The Foundation's commitment to supporting the constructive participation of citizens in their governance, and to nurturing the growth of vibrant and free civil societies is informed by a recognition that social structures and systems are not neutral. Rather, they operate in and are shaped by power dynamics that too often reflect and perpetuate inequality and discrimination. We understand that gender inequality is a major challenge to our vision of a Commonwealth of equal, just and inclusive societies and are committed to integrating gender considerations across our work and the work we support. To that end, we ask all applicants to demonstrate an understanding of how gender operates within their chosen theme/s and show how they will integrate that understanding into their project.

For example, a persuasive project proposal that seeks to promote free access to health care for informal workers would likely demonstrate an understanding of how gender affects access and what this means in terms of different needs and priorities. That same proposal would also likely demonstrate an understanding of how gender in this setting intersects with other forms of discrimination (e.g., how race or age impacts on the hurdles facing women workers seeking to access health care services) that are different from those faced by other female informal workers; and how that understanding informs the project.

Partnerships

The Foundation understands the limits of our own capacity to fund worthwhile initiatives and we encourage applicants to consider carefully how they can leverage partnerships to enhance the scale, depth and breadth of their work. Only the applicant organisation, and not the partner(s), needs to satisfy the eligibility criteria. Partners might be informal groups, social movements, individual artists or advocates whose contribution to the project will increase its impact. (Note that if any proposed partners are registered organisations in the country of implementation, their registration certificates should also be provided as part of the application).

Participation of young people

While not a formal cross-cutting theme, young people are central to the Foundation's mission and its vision for a future Commonwealth of equal, just and inclusive societies. Applications are encouraged from CSOs working to

support and advance the involvement of young people in governance, as well as from CSOs that include young people in their organisational structure.

Small and vulnerable Member States

The Commonwealth Charter explicitly affirms the role of the Commonwealth as a champion of small states and a special duty on the Commonwealth to support and advocate for the interests of small states as well as those that are otherwise vulnerable. Applications from CSOs in small and vulnerable states that are members of the Foundation are strongly encouraged. *Note that applicants from small and vulnerable states whose projects are not selected under this open call, may be contacted to discuss other potential funding opportunities.*

7. An optional creative component

The Foundation understands the power of creative expression to influence change. As noted above, we are using this call to pilot support for the inclusion of a creative element into projects. This is an optional element and would be funded separately (up to 15% of the total grant awarded).

Examples of creative components might include:

- A project on access to information in relation to health might request funding for a photographer to develop a series of images for use in awareness raising or advocacy.
- A project to advance public policy in relation to climate change might request funding for production of a video or public performance piece that aims to amplify the advocacy goals of the project.

Applicants who are interested in taking up this optional element are invited to provide a brief outline of their idea in the application form. Shortlisted applicants will be invited to work with Foundation staff to flesh out this aspect of their proposal. The Foundation will provide additional guidance to successful grant applicants whose projects include a creative component.

8. Capacity Development

The Foundation understands that organisational capacity development is a priority for many CSOs who may be interested in seeking project funding through this call. We are committed to supporting organisations to build their capacity to function effectively. To that end, successful grantees will be invited to propose capacity development initiatives costed up to 5% of the total project budget. These funds can be used to cover organisational needs

that are broader than the project but that help to enhance organisational effectiveness. The Foundation will provide further guidance to successful grantees who are interested in taking up this option. (There is no need to include capacity development proposals in the application).

9. The review, shortlisting and approval process

Information on the application process is provided above (see heading 3). A link to the application form and other relevant documentation and information materials can be found at commonwealthfoundation.com/grants. Note that only applications made through the online portal will be considered.

Applications open at 1pm on 29 October 2021 and close at 1pm on 30 November 2021.

Shortlisted applicants will be contacted by Foundation staff by the end of March 2022. These applicants will be invited to provide further information in support of their application including a detailed project budget. At that time, applicants may also discuss and refine any initial proposals to add a creative component to the application.

Confirmed grantees will be informed by the end of June 2022 and it is expected that grant agreements will be concluded soon thereafter, allowing for implementation to begin as soon as possible in the third quarter of 2022 (July-September).

The assessment criteria for applications is as follows:

1. The applicant organisation meets all eligibility criteria.
2. The application provides a clear *description of the problem* that the applicant is seeking to address.
3. The application provides a clear explanation of *how* the applicant plans to address the problem and contribute to its resolution.
4. The application makes a persuasive case for the proposed approach to the problem. Is the approach *timely*? Is it *relevant*? Is it *feasible*?
5. The applicant organisation demonstrates that it has the *capacity* to undertake the project and complete it successfully within the stipulated time.

Additional assessment criteria may relate to the themes and considerations set out under heading 6 above.

9. Monitoring and reporting of projects

Confirmed grantees will be asked to develop a monitoring plan for their project. The Foundation will provide guidance and support to grantees on their monitoring plan.

Grantees who are implementing a one-year project will be asked to provide an end of project narrative report, along with a financial report. Grantees who are implementing a two-year project will submit a narrative and financial report at the end of the first year as well as an end-of-project narrative and financial report. Reporting schedules will be agreed between the grantee and the Foundation and set out in the grant agreement.

10. Questions

Organisations interested in submitting a grant application are invited to consult our frequently asked questions document for any additional information and to make sure that they also check the additional documents that have been provided. All additional documentation can be found at commonwealthfoundation.com/grants.

If these documents do not contain an answer, please email the Foundation at cfgrants@commonwealth.int and we will reply as soon as possible.