



## **GRANTS CALL 2022-2023: 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 3, 5, and 13-16, including all relevant targets focusing on participation in decision-making at all levels. The Strategic Plan identifies three thematic areas of focus: (i) health; (ii) environment and climate change; and (iii) freedom of expression. Gender equality is 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**

1. The applicant must be a not-for-profit civil society organization (CSO) registered in an eligible Commonwealth Foundation member country. (See [here](#) for list of eligible member countries).
2. Newly registered organisations (those that have been registered and operating for less than a year) should not apply.
3. The proposed project must be implemented in the country of registration. 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, strong local participation in project implementation is required (see further

- information on partnerships below).
4. The applicant organization must have a minimum of two years' demonstrable experience working on participatory governance and advocacy within the area/theme(s) of the proposed project.
  5. The total grant amount requested must be between £15,000 and £30,000 per year, and for a maximum of two years.
  6. The requested grant amount should not exceed 70% of the applicant organisation's total annual income, averaged over the past two years.
  7. The annual income of the applicant organization, averaged over the past two years, must be less than £2m.
  8. The project proposal must address at least one of the notified priority themes.
  9. The project proposal must demonstrate appropriate integration of gender considerations. For example, the applicant may use the findings of gender analysis to inform the design of the project proposal and / or and ensure allocation of adequate resources to effectively address gender equality in the project cycle.
  10. Proposals must relate to projects that are expected to begin within the second half of 2023 (i.e., after 1 July 2023 and before end September 2023).

Note that applications not meeting the above eligibility requirements will not be considered

Note:

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 expansion and/or continuation of that work. We are therefore willing to consider supporting an additional component or extension of an existing initiative. This should be made clear in the application.

### **3. How to apply**

You will first need to login and create your Survey Monkey Apply account to complete and submit an online application form. Only completed applications that have been submitted using the online application system will be considered.

All applications must include the following additional documentation:

1. A logic model (using the template provided).
2. A copy of the organisation's registration certificate. This should be clear a scan of an official registration document provided by the relevant authorities in the country where the organisation is registered. Trust deeds will not be accepted in lieu of a registration certificate. When the original registration certificates are not in English, shortlisted applications can be expected to be asked to provide a certified translation.
3. For grants of **£15,000 per annum**: The applicant organisation may choose to submit either their audited accounts or a copy of the organisation most recent annual accounts. 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 2020.

4. 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 must be signed off by the auditor and the organisation's Board or its principal executive officer. They should not be older than December 2020.

#### **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 focusing 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 constructive engagement between civil society and government, including civil society participation around policy development, policy implementation 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 considerations of 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.

## **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 lead 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 and implementation approach.

## **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.*

## **Capacity Development**

This call is for specific project proposals. It means that the budget which is submitted must relate to the costs that will be incurred in implementing the proposed project. The Foundation does appreciate the importance of strengthening organisational capacity. Those applicants whose projects are shortlisted will therefore be invited to propose capacity strengthening initiatives as part of their project's budget, costed at up to 5% of the grant amount requested. These funds can be used to cover organisational needs that are broader than the project but that help to enhance organisational effectiveness.

## **7. 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](https://commonwealthfoundation.com/grants). Note that only applications made through the online portal will be considered. Application and supporting documents cannot be emailed to the Foundation. Complete documentation must be submitted together online.

**Applications open at 1pm on 29 September 2022 and close at 1pm on 1 November 2022.**

Shortlisted applicants will be contacted by Foundation staff by the end of May 2023. These applicants will be invited to provide further information in support of their application including a detailed project budget.

Successful applicants will be informed by the end of June 2023, 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 2023 (July-September). If you haven't been contacted by the end of May 2023, it means that your application has been unsuccessful.

The assessment criteria for applications are 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 applicant organisation provides good evidence of consultations with beneficiaries.
5. The application makes a persuasive case for the proposed approach to the problem. Is the approach *timely*? Is it *relevant*? Is it *feasible*?
6. The applicant organisation demonstrates that it has the *capacity* to undertake the project and complete it successfully within the stipulated time.
7. The applicant organisation demonstrates serious commitment towards gender equality.

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

## **8. Monitoring and reporting of projects**

Successful applicants 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.

## **9. 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](https://commonwealthfoundation.com/grants).

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

## **10. Eligibility**

Before proceeding with any application, please check that your country is eligible. the full list of eligible countries can be found at: [commonwealthfoundation.com/grants](https://commonwealthfoundation.com/grants).