

Civil Society Advisory Governors (CSAG)

Terms of Reference

Dec 2022

1. BACKGROUND AND MANDATE

The Commonwealth Foundation, one of the three intergovernmental organisations of the Commonwealth, is explicitly mandated to advance and support Commonwealth civil society. To that end, the Foundation's focus is firmly on solidarity with the people of the Commonwealth: using its resources, expertise, platforms, and partnerships to amplify their voices and advance their interests.

Since the Foundation's inception, civil society has been involved, in one form or another, in its work and its governance. Its founding document (Memorandum of Understanding), concluded between Member States, establishes a Civil Society Advisory Governors (CSAG mechanism) within the overall governance structure (Board of Governors and Executive Committee) as follows:

The Foundation's Board of Governors will include five Civil Society Advisory Governors. These Advisory Governors are recruited and selected by the staff of the Foundation in consultation with the Board to ensure that they [are] broadly representative of the different regions of the Commonwealth as well as the different sectors and constituencies comprising civil society. The Civil Society Advisory Governors will select two of their number to attend the Executive Committee. They will serve for a two-year term, which may be extended with Board approval.

The present document affirms this mandate, while providing additional detail on the role and functioning of the CSAG mechanism.

2. PURPOSE OF THE CSAG

The CSAG mechanism exists to help ensure that the Foundation, as an intergovernmental organisation, is working to fulfil its mission to advance the interests and needs of Commonwealth civil society and, in so doing, to advance the principles and values of the Commonwealth. CSAG members do not have any decision-making responsibilities, nor are they involved in the day-to-day running of the Foundation. Rather, they provide guidance, advice, and support to Member State governors and to the Directorate in accordance with an agreed work plan.

3. COMPOSITION AND TERMS

The CSAG mechanism is composed of five individuals, one from each Commonwealth region. Members are recruited as a group and serve for two years, a term that can be extended by the Board upon recommendation of the Director-General.

4. RECRUITMENT PROCESS AND SELECTION PROFILE

The Director-General is responsible for the CSAG recruitment process in collaboration and consultation with the Chair of the Board of Governors and the Chair of the Executive Committee. The list of candidates recommended by the above three office holders is submitted to the Board of Governors for its review and endorsement.

The initial phase of recruitment is undertaken through an open solicitation of expressions of interest. The Foundation may also reach out to organisations and individuals that are familiar with the Foundation and its mission for contact details of persons who may be invited to lodge an expression of interest. Any individual who is a national of a Commonwealth Foundation Member State and an active member of an established CSO is eligible to apply to be a CSAG member. Individuals associated in any way with organisations that are currently receiving grants from the Commonwealth Foundation are ineligible to serve (and any such conflict of interest that arises or could arise during a member's term must be declared as soon as it is known to the member).

In reviewing expressions of interest and selection of members, the Foundation will consider:

- Capacity to represent adequately the interests and priorities of the region.
- Extent of experience with, and contacts within, civil society of the region most especially in relation to the Foundation's main areas of work as set out in the Foundation's strategic plan.
- Experience and understanding of working in a constructive and participatory way with governments.
- Willingness and capacity to contribute time and expertise to an agreed level of effort (estimated to be around half a day per month plus additional days associated with any required travel to London and CHOGM as detailed at 7 below).

The selection process will also seek to ensure that the group of five members is cohesive: that it contains a good mix of skills and experience and is appropriately balanced in terms of gender. Other factors may be programme specific: for example, that the CSAG member from the region where the next CHOGM is scheduled to take place should be well-positioned to provide the specific support and advice that will be required for the Foundation in respect of CPF (as detailed at 5 below).

Once the selection process has been finalised, the names and profiles of the selected persons are submitted to the Board of Governors (by the Chair of that body), for consideration and approval on a no objection basis.

5. CSAG ROLES

Governance involvement

- All members of the CSAG mechanism participate in the Foundation's annual Board of Governors meeting which takes place in June each year. They receive all meeting documents in advance and may, through the Chair, request the floor for questions or comment.
- In addition, the CSAG group selects two of its members to participate in the Executive Committee meetings of the Foundation which takes place twice a year in June and

December. The two nominated members receive all governance documents in advance and may, through the Chair, request the floor for questions and comment.

Advice, support and advocacy

- All CSAG members provide advice to the Foundation through the Directorate, as required and requested. This may include, for example, advising on development and implementation of the Foundation's strategic plan.
- All CSAG members champion the Foundation and its work within their own region and through their own contacts and networks.
- Individual CSAG members may be asked for advice on aspects of the Foundation's programming relevant to their expertise, experience and geographical location. This could include, for example, advising on possible speakers and moderators for Foundation events; and providing technical input into concept notes for specific initiatives.

Commonwealth People's Forum: Content Advisory Committee

- All five CSAG members will, along with the Director-General and representatives of the host country, constitute the Content Advisory Committee for the Commonwealth People's Forum (CPF). In that role CSAG members will provide guidance and advice to the Foundation on the programme for the CPF within parameters set by the Foundation and the host country.
- Individual CSAG members may be invited to participate in the planning or execution of specific CPF events.

6. RESPONSIBILITIES OF CSAG AND THE FOUNDATION

Responsibilities of CSAG members

CSAG members are expected to:

- Learn about the Foundation and its work and to develop an understanding of how the Foundation operates as an intergovernmental organisation at the service of civil society and how CSAG can champion the Foundation and its work.
- Perform their individual and collective role actively, constructively and with sensitivity to the political environment within which the Foundation operates.
- Make themselves available for Foundation duties as agreed.
- Commit to the Foundation's Code of Conduct including in relation to conflicts of interest.

Responsibilities of the Foundation

The Foundation undertakes to:

- Collaborate with CSAG in developing its work plan and to provide all required support to ensure its effective implementation.
- Keep CSAG informed of developments within the Foundation including of opportunities to participate in Foundation events.
- Work with respective Chairs to ensure that, at governance meetings, Member State governors are aware of CSAG and understand its role within the Foundation.

7. METHODS OF WORK

Work plan: The Foundation will work with CSAG to develop a work plan covering the two-year period of appointment within the first quarter of the CSAG term.

Work plan contents: The work plan will include a schedule for participation in the Foundation's governance structures. It will also detail key areas of focus including CSAG's role as part of the CPF Content Advisory Committee.

Meetings: CSAG will be encouraged to meet as a group at least twice each year, and to set up its own internal systems for communication. The Director-General will make her/himself available as often as required to meet the group. This will be in addition to providing regular email updates.

Travel: CSAG will conduct most of its work remotely. However, it is envisaged that it will meet in person up to twice during the two-year term: once in its first or second quarter, to develop the work plan and participate in a briefing on the Foundation and its work; and again, at the time of the Commonwealth People's Forum.

Expenses: The CSAG role is not remunerated. Agreed costs of CSAG participation are covered by the Foundation.