



Commonwealth Foundation

Evaluation of Commonwealth Foundation strategy 2017-2021 and support to strategic planning 2021-2025

Request for proposals (two consultants)

Summary:

The Commonwealth Foundation is recruiting a team of two consultants (applicants may apply individually or as a team) to undertake a comprehensive evaluation of its work covering the current strategic planning period 2017-2021. The team will use the results of that evaluation to support the Foundation in the development of its new strategic plan 2021-2025. The total team input is expected to be around 100 days over 6-8 months commencing in the second quarter of 2020 with completion in the first quarter of 2021.

PART 1: THE COMMONWEALTH FOUNDATION

1.1. About the Commonwealth Foundation

The Commonwealth Foundation is the Commonwealth agency for civil society; a stand-alone organisation within the Commonwealth family established by, funded by, and reporting to governments. The Foundation supports civil society throughout the Commonwealth through grant-making and capacity development work as well as through its cultural initiative, the Commonwealth Writers programme.

1.2. About the Foundation's 2017 - 2021 Strategy

The Foundation's 2017-2021 Strategy takes inspiration from Sustainable Development Goal 16 (SDG 16) - *Promote peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development*. SDG 5 - *Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls* - is also a critical plank in the Strategy: informing all aspects of the Foundation's work.

The focus of the Strategy is on advancing **participatory governance**, (which implies creative and constructive interaction between citizens and government, regular or institutionalized processes where citizens can contribute to policy formulation and decision-making through inclusive, accountable and responsive institutions).

The strategy commits the Foundation to working with '**civic voices**': a term that extends beyond organised civil society organisations (CSOs) to embrace collectives, social movements, groups and informal associations whose contribution is important to participatory governance. This connects to the Strategy's emphasis on supporting the engagement of '**less-heard voices**': individuals, and groups that struggle to find opportunities to participate in decision-making processes and whose inclusion in such processes can make important contributions to public discourse, policy and accountability processes.

See further: [Commonwealth Foundation Strategy 2017-2021](#)

<https://commonwealthfoundation.com/resource/commonwealth-foundation-strategic-plan-2017-21/>

PART TWO: THE TASK

2.1. Task overview and key dates

The work to be completed under these consultancies will comprise two components: (1) an evaluation of the 2017-2021 strategy followed by (2) support to preparation of the next strategy 2021-2025.

The Foundation is seeking to identify a team of two complementary experts to jointly undertake both tasks (“The Team”). Organisations and individuals may apply. The level of effort is expected to be around 100 days: appropriately divided among the two consultants.

Note the following key dates:

- The current strategic plan takes the Foundation up to **June 2021**.
- An external review of the current strategic plan will commence early in the **second quarter of 2020** (expected May 2020)
- The review team will consult with the Foundation’s governance structures during meetings scheduled for **June 2020**
- The final report of the Review should be completed by **November 2020**
- Development of the new Strategic Plan for 2021-2025 should commence in the **last quarter of 2020**
- An initial draft of the next strategic plan will be submitted to the Foundation’s governance body (Executive Committee) in early **December 2020**.
- The final draft of the new strategic plan should be completed by **March 2021**.

2.2. Component 1 - evaluation of the current strategy

The evaluation will cover all of the Foundation’s four programmes as well as Support Services and management / leadership. It is expected that the evaluation of the Foundation’s work under the current strategic plan will focus on the following:

- Relevance of that work to its mission; internal and external complementarity of its programmes
- Effectiveness of that work in achieving planned results, securing positive, sustainable impacts
- Efficiency and effectiveness of the Foundation’s activities and internal processes, including planning, monitoring, assessment, learning and leveraging knowledge.

Note that the above is provided only as a guide. The team will be encouraged to work closely with the Foundation in elaborating both the framework for the evaluation and the specific questions that are to be addressed in its work.

The evaluation is critical to informing key choices to be made for the next period. These include:

- The Foundation's Theory of Change as set out in the Strategy (does it need to be revised / refined?)
- The Logic Model (also set out in the Strategy) that will steer the Foundation's work under the agreed Theory of Change
- The programming approaches to be adopted to secure results
- The shape of the Foundation and its ways of working (including its planning, monitoring, assessment and learning processes - as well as programme support, management and leadership).

In addition to providing the information and evidence necessary to make informed decisions about the future, the evaluation is essential to ensuring that the Foundation is fully accountable to its principal stakeholders, in particular its Board of Governors and Executive Committee: demonstrating a commitment to transparency and learning and being able to show how the lessons of the past have influenced its proposed path forward.

Expected output of Component 1: Final evaluation report not exceeding 25 pages (inclusive of executive summary but excluding annexes) revised and finalised following submission of a draft version.

2.3. Component 2 -Support to development of the 2021-2025 strategy

The Foundation is responsible for developing its next Strategic Plan and submitting a draft to its governance bodies (Executive Committee and Board of Governors) for review and approval.

The Team will support the Foundation in this process: facilitating both internal and external discussions; helping to interrogate proposed theories of change and logical models; and supporting the crafting of a narrative that clearly explains both direction and rationale (*what* is being done and *why*). The Team is also expected to work closely with the Foundation's Finance Staff in developing a robust budget to support the Strategy.

Expected output of Component 2: Draft strategy document (not exceeding 30 pages inclusive of Executive Summary but excluding annexes).

Note: While there will be two discrete outputs, considerable overlap is expected between the two components, i.e. that the evaluation process will feed directly into the strategy development process and that some aspects of both will be undertaken simultaneously.

PART 3: THE TEAM

The Foundation is seeking to secure a team of two persons with complementary skills to undertake both components of the task as outlined above. While individual and joint responsibilities will be finalised once the team members are identified, the profiles outlined below are provided as a guide.

Team Leader: the team leader has overall responsibility for delivering the specified outputs within the agreed time frame and to the required quality, ensuring that feedback from the Foundation is effectively reflected in final submitted versions. S/he should have:

- Extensive experience in the international development / technical assistance / grant- making sector, preferably gained in both civil society and intergovernmental contexts
- Demonstrated technical competence in evaluating grant-making and capacity development programmes
- Experience leading strategic planning processes; technical competence in preparing strategic plans including theories of change and performance frameworks for development organisations
- An understanding of the political and other contextual aspects of intergovernmental organisations.

Technical specialist: the Technical Specialist will provide the technical and operational insight necessary to ensure that both the evaluation and support to strategic planning reflect the realities of the Foundation's operating environment. S/he should have the following:

- Extensive experience in the international development / technical assistance / grant-making sector, preferably gained in both civil society and intergovernmental contexts
- Relevant experience in conducting evaluations / participating in strategic planning processes and the preparation of strategic plans including theories of change and performance frameworks for development organisations;
- Specialist knowledge in one or more of the following areas: governance, human rights, gender, creative expression.

Both team members are required to be fluent in English, with excellent writing and communication skills.

Part 4: PROPOSED APPROACH AND METHOD OF WORK

As noted below, the proposals submitted under this call are expected to flesh out and explain a recommended approach to both components: (i) the evaluation; and (ii) the support to develop the next strategic plan. The following provides a useful, general indication of how the process is expected to be conducted.

The engagement will be highly participatory: The Foundation's team of officers is small, dynamic and highly motivated. It is expected that successful delivery of both components will require close and constant contact and discussion with the Foundation's staff. Other core stakeholders that must be closely involved include the Foundation's governance

bodies (most particularly its Executive Committee which provides member State oversight of the Foundation's work and is responsible for recommending any strategic or policy changes including the draft 2021-2025 Strategic Plan to the Foundation's Board for approval).

Work will be undertaken primarily from and through the Foundation's London offices: while the Foundation's various programmes are largely 'field-based', their diversity means that a representative sample is not possible, thereby lessening the value of field visits. It is proposed that both components of the task be undertaken through the London office (where all staff and members of the governance bodies are based). With support and advice from Foundation staff, the team is expected to develop a list of partners, stakeholders and beneficiaries to be consulted via teleconference (organised by the Foundation). Note: in consultation with the Team, the Foundation will determine the usefulness / viability of a site visit to CHOGM 2020 / 2020 Commonwealth Peoples Forum.

Conceptual clarity and clear communication are paramount: as an outward-facing organisation that is committed to transparency, the Foundation will make public the evaluation and the next strategy: using these two documents to communicate with its governance bodies and stakeholders in ways that promote understanding and ownership. It is therefore essential that the process of evaluation and strategy development - as well as the documentation produced through those processes - demonstrate conceptual clarity and adopt clear, accessible language.

Evaluation: initial steps: The team will undertake a desk review of documentation provided by the Foundation and, taking additional guidance from the Foundation, will prepare a *draft evaluation plan*. This should establish the evaluation criteria; nominate key lines of inquiry (see below for guidance); and describe the approach taken by the team. It should also establish the *links* between this component and the Team's support to development of the next strategy. The draft evaluation Plan will be discussed with Foundation staff and, once finalised, will serve to guide the process and structure its outcome.

PART 5: FEES

The Foundation will negotiate an appropriate daily rate for the consultant/s, set with reference to the market within which it operates and on the expectation of an input of 100 days / 50 days per person. (Note that the allocation across the team is to be finalised once its composition is finalised).

PART 6: THE PROPOSAL

Interested individuals and organisations are invited to submit a proposal for either one position within the Team, or for the Team as a whole.

Generally: the Proposal should contain a statement of interest that reflects a solid understanding of the terms of the present call, as well as of the Foundation's history, operating context and current approach (as embodied in the 2017-2021 Strategic Plan and other publicly available documentation).

Specifically:

- The proposal should explain how the applicant/s meets the requirements of the assignment and include a relevant CV for each applicant.
- The proposal should present the outlines of an approach to the two tasks and a proposed methodology. (Note that less detail will be required with regard to the strategic planning process given the expectation that the first task, evaluation of the current strategy, will heavily inform that process).
- If the proposal relates to a team, it should include a description of roles, responsibilities and working relationship of each team member.
- If the applicant is a company, the proposal should provide necessary information (in addition to CVs of persons proposed to conduct the task).

Applicants are invited to provide relevant examples of their work (either authored / co-authored evaluation reports or strategic plans)

Proposals (in PDF) are to be submitted by email for the attention of the Task Manager at CFevaluation@commonwealth.int to arrive no later than Friday 28 February, 5pm GMT. Any queries may be sent to the same address.

Proposals will be evaluated with reference to: (i) expertise of the applicant/s; and (ii) quality of the proposal.

The Foundation reserves the right to reject any or all proposals submitted. The Foundation shall not be responsible for any costs incurred by the candidate in preparing, submitting or presenting the proposal.