



Commonwealth
Foundation

Commonwealth Foundation Strategy Plan 2017-21

11 November 2016

The Commonwealth Foundation was established by Heads of Government in support of the idea that the Commonwealth is as much an association of peoples as it is of governments. It is a unique, stand-alone organisation; it is funded by and reports to governments, which have given it a mandate to support civil society. The Foundation is dedicated to advancing people's participation in all aspects of public dialogue so that ultimately their quality of life is improved.

1. Introduction

1.1. The Foundation pre-2012

The Commonwealth Foundation was created in 1966 as a charity under English Law. It was seen as a mechanism for supporting the development of associations of professionals. This responded to the demand in newly independent member states for qualified personnel in the post-colonial era.

Through the 1970s member states recognised the potential of the wider civic movement to contribute to processes of nation building and international solidarity, and so the Foundation was recast as an inter-governmental organisation (IGO) in 1982. The scale and scope of what came to be known as Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs) grew in response to national development needs and international processes including the Earth Summit in 1992, the Fourth World Conference on Women in 1995 and the Millennium Summit in 2000. The Foundation continued to evolve in response.

When Heads of Government met in Perth in 2011 they agreed to reform the Commonwealth and its structures. They recognised the need to promote the future of the Commonwealth through the strong and important voice of its people and concluded that there was a need to re-launch the Commonwealth Foundation in 2012 “while retaining its fundamental intergovernmental nature and maintaining its accountability to member states, with a revised mandate and Memorandum of Understanding so that it can more effectively deliver the objectives of strengthening and mobilising civil society in support of Commonwealth principles and priorities.”¹

1.2. The 2012-2017 strategy

In response to the CHOGM mandate, the 2012-2017² Strategic Plan marked the beginning of a third phase in the evolution of the Foundation. Civil society contributions to responsive and accountable governance for effective development were the central concepts in the Strategy and informed a new Vision and Mission.

¹ Paragraph 9c. CHOGM Communique. Perth 2011.

² In recognition of the steps that needed to be taken to re-orientate the Commonwealth Foundation towards its new direction, the Board of Governors in December 2014 granted a one-year extension to the original Strategic Plan period of 2012-2016.

These two pillars of the Plan, along with a new set of Values and a strategic Logic Model³, were developed with the participation of the Foundation's staff and consultations with other stakeholders, including Member States, civil society organisations and the Commonwealth Secretariat.

In 2012 the Foundation embraced results-based planning and management. This meant that its Logic Model flowed from its Mission. In turn its programme structure, together with its human and financial resourcing, were designed to achieve the Logic Model outcomes.

The Foundation was restructured structured around four "Outcome Areas", the Grants programme and the enabling services. The Outcome Areas were summarised as:

1. Creative expression
2. Civil society capacity development
3. Constructive engagement with institutions
4. Knowledge management

The Grants programme was designed to pursue the four short-term outcomes. The enabling services - communications, human resources, finance, operations, and leadership - were tasked to pursue the outcome: "A more effective Foundation".

The Foundation also defined three cross-cutting outcomes that it would pursue in all its work:

- Gender equality
- Environmental sustainability
- Cultural respect and understanding

The 2012-2017 Plan signalled a determination to apply more focus, rigour and a longer-term, outcome based orientation to its work. This brought a number of benefits for the organisation. For example, it enabled the Foundation to design multi-year initiatives for the first time; and every staff member was able to locate their work as a contribution to the achievement of outcomes.

The outcomes orientation also led the transformation of the Grants programme. There were four principal changes:

1. Grant applicants were expected to articulate logic models - outcomes and outputs - underlying their proposed projects.
2. The outcomes for any project needed to contribute to the Foundation's Logic Model.
3. Grants were substantial enough (in scale and duration) to stand a realistic chance of contributing substantially to these outcomes.
4. From 2013, Grant projects were invited to a kick-off workshop centring on monitoring, evaluation and learning.

The strategy period saw the Foundation build a comprehensive set of policies and guiding frameworks. These included:

- *Capacity Development Framework* which described capacity development as a holistic process of change whereby individuals, institutions and systems develop their abilities to perform functions, solve problems and set and achieve their goals.

³ The Logic Model depicts the relationships between the resources, activities, outputs and outcomes of the plan. See Annexes A and B for the 2012-17 Vision, Mission, Values and Logic Model. Two amendments were made to the 2012 Logic Model. The version in Annex B is the final one under the 2012-17 strategy.

- *Civil Society Engagement Strategy* which was developed to complement the capacity development framework and provide the Foundation with a guide for engaging and empowering civil society.
- *Mainstreaming Toolkit for Cross-Cutting Outcomes* which provided a common set of analytical concepts and tools for integrating the three cross-cutting themes under the 2012-17 strategy into the Foundation's programmes at the key stages of the project cycle.
- *Learning and Communications Strategy* which presented the rationale for a structured approach to organisational and group learning, maps the knowledge processes and tools needed to achieve good results, and recognises communications as a critical support and enabler of knowledge sharing.
- *Risk Framework* which provided a rigorous process for the identification, assessment and monitoring of risks associated with each area of work.

1.3. The Foundation's corporate governance in the 2012-17 strategy period

The Commonwealth Foundation is one of the Commonwealth's three intergovernmental agencies alongside the Commonwealth of Learning and the Commonwealth Secretariat. This status is conferred by Commonwealth Heads of Government and requires the highest standards of public accountability. The Foundation meets these standards through the effective and efficient servicing of its Board and sub-committees. The Foundation's principal article is its Memorandum of Understanding (MOU).

The Foundation's Board of Governors comprises representatives from each of its member states, which are usually represented by their diplomatic missions in London. In addition to these 45 delegates the Foundation makes provision for civil society representation in its governance. In the early 2000s the practice was established of having a Civil Society Advisory Committee nominate five of its number to represent civil society at the Board. There is also a seat reserved for the Commonwealth Secretary-General and this is one means of enabling coordination between the two agencies.

The Board is chaired by an independent person who is nominated by member states. The Board delegates work to its Executive Committee, which usually meets prior to Board meetings and engages with the details of the Foundation's reports and plans. Other committees can be established and these report to the Executive Committee. Prime among these sub-committees is the Grants Committee. This comprises representatives of member states. Civil society members are not present, in order to avoid any conflict of interest. In addition to receiving reports on grants made by the Foundation, the Committee makes decisions to award grants based on technical proposals provided by staff. The Grants Committee also provides input to the development of the grant-making strategy and regularly reviews policy.

During the 2012-17 period a number of reforms took place which changed the way in which the Foundation's governance operated. In 2015 the Board agreed to reduce the volume of meetings associated with the Foundation's governance. The Board now meets annually and the Executive Committee twice a year. The Commonwealth Foundation's Civil Society Advisory Committee was also reformed in 2015 following a review. It was replaced with

provision for five Civil Society Advisory Governors, who would focus specifically on providing inputs to the Board's deliberations.

2. Evaluation of the 2012-2017 strategy

In December 2015, following a competitive bidding process, the Foundation commissioned an external evaluation of its progress under the 2012-17 strategy. Evidence was gathered over a five-month period and included more than 60 interviews and, separately, the capture of the views of 30 stakeholder institutions through an on-line survey. The evaluator also visited a grant project and an area of regional programme activity in the Caribbean. The evaluation's emerging findings were available for the beginning of the new strategy development process in July 2016 and the final report was submitted in September. The following are the evaluation's recommendations. Principal Findings and Conclusions can be found at Annex C.

External evaluation recommendations

Creative expression

1. Review the relationship between Commonwealth Writers and the Foundation's theory of change to emphasise the contribution of less-heard voices to public discourse rather than its contribution to participatory governance.
2. Develop an outline three to four-year programme of work for the next strategy period that provides focus, synergy and follow through to Commonwealth Writers activities.
3. Develop a performance framework for Commonwealth Writers with appropriate metrics at outcome and output level for different types of initiatives.
4. Revise and update Commonwealth Writers Social Media Strategy and incorporate in planning and reporting systems.
5. Adopt a more systematic approach to making connections by building a network of cultural practitioners that facilitates the exchange of skills and experiences.

Capacity development

6. Reflect on the inputs to date to regional civil society platforms, including relationships with local implementing partners, and prioritise support where it is most likely to lead to lasting change.
7. Adopt a more systematic approach to monitoring the effectiveness of capacity development approaches and documenting and sharing the lessons learned.

Constructive engagement

8. Review the status of civil society engagement in Commonwealth forums in strategic discussions with Secretariat.
9. Plan support to civil society engagement with governance to include greater synergy with the Grants programme at national level.
10. Include global networking activities in annual work plans and reports.

Knowledge management

11. Develop a 'learning for improvement' agenda in association with the new strategic objectives.
12. Develop a more systematic approach to knowledge capture and dissemination.
13. Establish a prompt or reminder system to ensure knowledge resources e.g. mission reports are shared internally.

Cross-cutting outcomes

14. Develop a more systematic framework to monitor and report on cross-cutting outcomes in the new strategy.

Grants programme

15. Redefine the role of the Grants Programme to more explicitly test new approaches and harvest learning key to the achievement of outcomes.
16. Issue more focused Calls for Proposals to maximise learning and synergy with Outcome Areas.
17. Adapt project performance ratings system for annual portfolio reporting.
18. Include guidance on data gathering tools in the monitoring and evaluation induction workshop for new grantees.
19. Develop a knowledge sharing strategy to include ongoing learning and peer-exchange throughout the project life cycle.
20. Monitor experiences of unsuccessful grant applicants to inform application process.
21. Develop a communications plan to ensure the regular production of compelling stories in different formats of project achievements.

A more effective Foundation

22. Develop a more comprehensive theory of change that includes all programmes contributing to outcomes.
23. Explore alignment of new strategic objectives with the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, in particular Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 16 at indicator level.
24. Initiate a strategic dialogue with the Commonwealth Secretariat on complementary roles re. Agenda 2030, in particular SDG 16.
25. Plan the outline of four year programmes in the new strategy with short-term outcomes that are achievable within the period.
26. Report annually to work plan indicators and ensure that systems and processes are in place to gather data in line with these.
27. Review the organisation of Outcome Areas 2 and 3 to deliver the new strategy objectives.

3. The 2017-21 strategy

3.1. Strategy development process

Building on the emerging findings, conclusions and recommendations of the external evaluation, the Foundation conducted a series of strategy development workshops in August and September 2016 facilitated by the Foundation's Results Based Management adviser. A synopsis of emerging directions for the strategy was presented and discussed in regional meetings with representatives of Member States (which were supplemented with bi-lateral meetings as requested) in October. This led to another workshop with staff and the final draft of the 2017-2021 strategy in November.

3.2. Challenges and opportunities for the Foundation 2017-21

The new strategy becomes operational as the world is mobilising to address the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. Global agreement on the Agenda was highly significant. The SDGs place emphasis on inclusive development that "leaves no one behind." The 17 Goals come as an indivisible package and for the first time the linkage between governance and better development outcomes is clearly articulated in Goal 16: *Promote peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development, provide access to justice for all and build effective, accountable and inclusive institutions at all levels.* Every Commonwealth country subscribes to this Agenda. Helping the Commonwealth to translate commitments made at the international level into tangible policies and processes at the national and regional levels will provide opportunities and challenges for the Foundation.

The breadth of issues that Goal 16 captures is vast, so for the Foundation, prioritisation will be critical. A continuing challenge is that of marginalised voices whose concerns are often not addressed by mainstream agendas. In the coming period the Foundation will highlight the importance of including marginalised voices in governance for development.

People's participation continues to evolve. Formal civil society organisations still attract members and supporters, but new alliances, networks and partnerships often come together quickly to meet emerging needs and respond to pressing issues. Civic voices⁴ find new ways to be heard, aided by access to information and social media. The Foundation will work with existing formal organisations as well as new and emerging collectives where these are able to demonstrate that they are inclusive, accountable and committed to engaging institutions in constructive dialogue. It will also work with individual civic voices (e.g. writers) where they have potential to influence public discourse.

3.3. The mandate for participatory governance

Participatory governance is at the heart of the Foundation's work in promoting peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development with effective, accountable and inclusive institutions at all levels. Accountability is the central lever of participatory governance. It implies creative and constructive interaction between civil society and government⁵ leading to full and effective participation of civic voices in key areas of public

⁴ The Foundation's interpretation of the term civic voices is explained at pages 12-13

⁵ H. Okoth-Ogendo in G. Hyden et al., 2000, p. 38

affairs including different stages of policy processes and feedback to government institutions on their performance.

Participatory governance is effective, “when higher levels of accountability and oversight are exercised”⁶ and “civic activism”⁷ is encouraged to enhance constructive engagement. This refers to processes and mechanisms that offer people who would otherwise remain voiceless a means of participation in decision making. It implies institutionalized arrangements offering equitable opportunities to those in the margins.

Participatory governance increases the potential for effective decision making with broad consensus, for stakeholder ownership, and for making institutions more responsive to citizens. The deliberations in participatory processes are designed to lead to better policy and delivery of public services.

There is a specific rationale for participatory governance in the context of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). It lies in the effective commitment of government to delivering the Goals and related policy. Effective commitment is derived from accountability, which is central to the implementation of the SDGs. This is a well-established principle. The Development Assistance Committee of the OECD has long argued that “participatory, accountable and efficient governance harnesses the activities of the state and its citizens to the objectives of sustainable social and economic development”⁸.

3.4. Vision, Mission and Values

SDG 16 provides a high level frame of reference for the new strategy. The following SDG 16 Targets are particularly relevant to the Foundation’s mandate from the Commonwealth Heads of Government in 2011⁹ which remains unchanged.

- *Develop effective, accountable and transparent institutions at all levels.*
- *Ensure responsive, inclusive, participatory and representative decision-making at all levels.*
- *Ensure public access to information and protect fundamental freedoms, in accordance with national legislation and international agreements.*

The Foundation’s **Vision** - *a world where every person is able to fully participate in and contribute to the sustainable development of a peaceful and equitable society* - was agreed in 2012. The Foundation’s 2012 Vision sits well with SDG 16 and therefore will remain unchanged. It provides the inspiration for the Foundation’s Mission as well as its Values and ways of working.

The Foundation’s **Mission** is intended to capture the essence of its intended contributions to sustainable development. The Mission statement agreed in 2012 - *to develop the capacity of Civil Society to act together and learn from each other to engage with the institutions that shape people’s lives* - shaped the initial Logic Model.

⁶ G. Hyden, 1992, *Governance and the Study of Politics*, in G. Hayden and M. Bratton (eds.), *Governance and Politics in Africa*, Lynne Reiner, Boulder, CO.

⁷ G. Hyden, D. Olowu, and H. Okoth Ogendo (eds.), 2000 *African Perspective on Governance*, Africa World Presses, Trenton, USA

⁸ Development Assistance Committee, 1997, in H. Schneider, *Participatory Governance: The Missing Link for Poverty Reduction*, 1999, OECD Publications, Paris, France, p.5

⁹ See page 1

The Mission is still valid for the Foundation's work in civil society capacity development and constructive engagement. However, it does not fully reflect the contribution to participatory governance of the Foundation's work with creative expression. It was learnt during the course of the 2012-17 strategy period that this work was more effective in supporting the contribution of *less-heard voices* to the shape and content of *public discourse*, than in brokering engagement between these voices and civil society organisations. This was recognised by the evaluation (recommendation #1) and was anticipated by a change to the Foundation's Logic Model in 2015.

The Mission statement will therefore be amended to more accurately reflect the work with creative expression. The new statement will be:

To support civic voices to share their stories, learn and act together and influence the institutions that shape people's lives.

The set of Values signed up to by the Foundation in 2012, continues to reflect the ethos of the organisation and its staff. With the decision to focus on one cross-cutting thematic area, *gender equality*, in the 2017-2021 strategy¹⁰ it was decided to ensure that *cultural respect and understanding* and *environmental sustainability* - the other two cross-cutting themes under the 2012-17 strategy - are enshrined in the Foundation's Values. It was felt that the first theme was adequately captured by *Diversity* in the value set; while the Foundation's commitment to environmental sustainability will be captured in a new value statement. This will be identified and agreed during operational planning in the first half of 2017, and along with the other Values translated into the Foundation's *Behaviours* that guide staff in their interactions. Foundation staff, in the periodic organisational reviews, will reflect on whether they and the Foundation as a whole are living up to the Values.

3.5. Strategic Logic Model

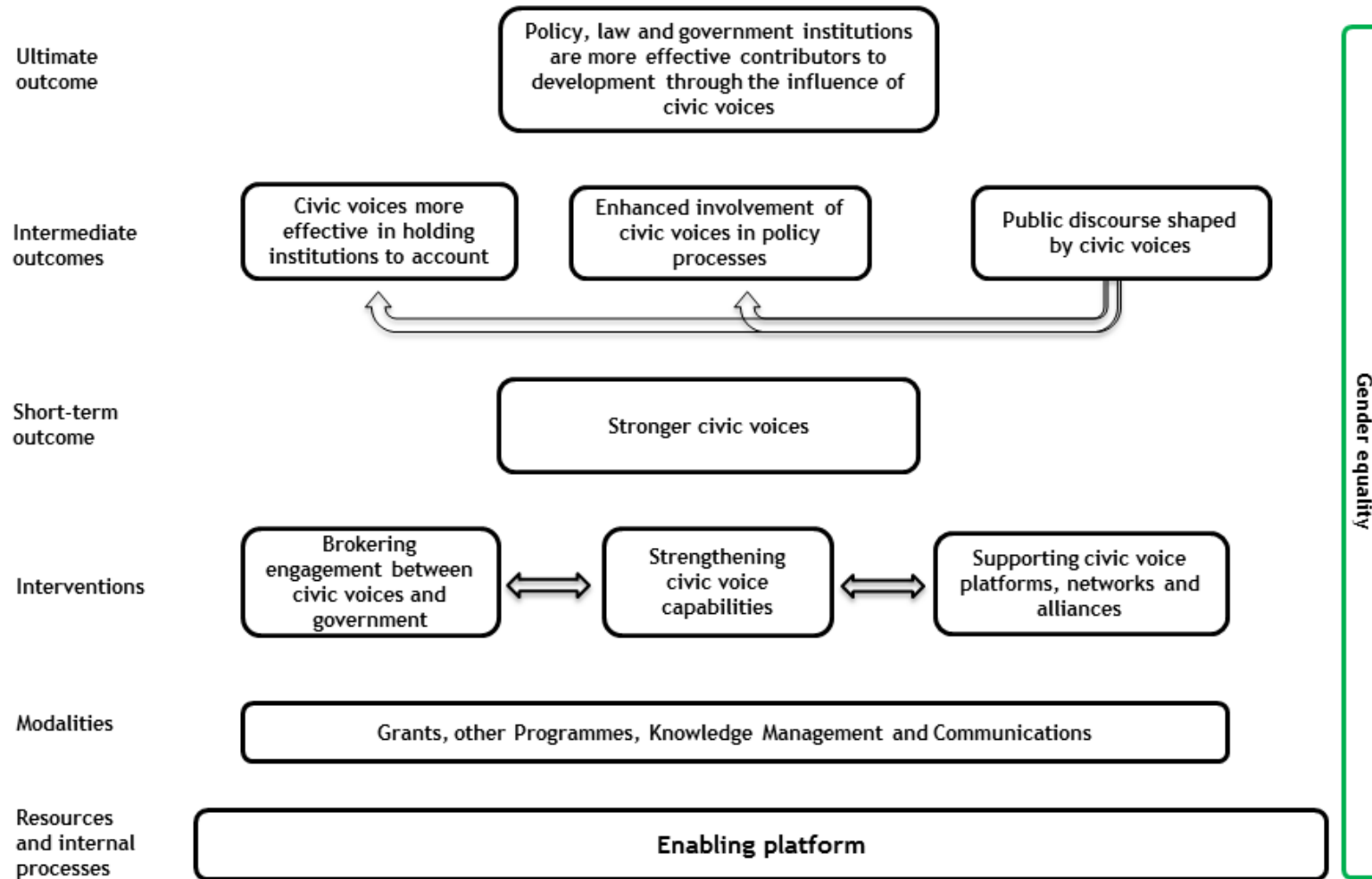
The 2012-17 strategy centred on a Logic Model - a simple diagrammatic expression of the sequence of broad outcomes to which the Foundation aimed to contribute through its initiatives (summarised as 'Focus' in the model). The progression through the Logic Model was qualified by a set of assumptions that were located in the Foundation's Outcome Performance Framework, along with indicators and means of verification. The Foundation had a separate conceptual 'theory of change' (TOC) as part of the Civil Society Engagement Strategy. The evaluation recommended that, to avoid confusion, the Foundation should have a single evaluable TOC or Logic Model.

A revised Logic Model is the centre-piece of the new strategy. Together with a set of assumptions, it constitutes the single TOC for the Foundation in the 2017-2021 period.¹¹

¹⁰ See page 24

¹¹ A logic model with related assumptions constitutes the most common form of TOC, although there are other interpretations of the TOC concept.

Commonwealth Foundation 2017-2021 Logic Model



The Logic Model flows from the Mission and therefore is not radically different from the Logic Model of 2012-17. However, it represents a number of significant changes.

1. The term “civic voices” is used in the place of “civil society organisations.” Civic voice(s) is a broader concept, which includes networks, social movements, informal alliances and coalitions and individuals such as storytellers in the broadest sense including writers and film-makers. A more detailed description of civic voices can be found below¹², and to ensure this broadening of scope is manageable, a set of rigorous criteria for the selection of civic voices has been developed and is outlined in the section *Foundation Frameworks and Sub-Strategies*.
2. There is stronger integration of the Foundation’s modalities (Grants, other Programmes, Knowledge Management and Communications) in its interventions. In contrast to the previous Logic Model, all interventions in the new strategy will work towards a single common short-term outcome: *Stronger civic voices*. Stronger civic voices will take a variety of forms which are described in the *Programmes* section below and will be captured by indicators in the Foundation’s Strategic Performance Framework¹³.
3. The intermediate and ultimate outcome levels are more nuanced than in 2012-17. They differentiate between civic voice involvement in policy processes and holding institutions to account e.g. for implementation of policy, application of law and the performance of institutions in delivering services. They also identify the intended result of the strengthening of civic voices in the *creative expression* sphere: the shaping of public discourse by those voices.
4. Unlike the 2012-2017 Logic Model, there is no explicit reference to working at the regional level. In the new strategy, the Foundation will adopt a more flexible approach to where it will lend its support, guided by its new partnership and capacity development frameworks. This will include helping civic voices and government to bring global or regional commitments to national stages, and helping them to escalate national models to the regional and/or global levels, provided that there is a real possibility of contributing to more inclusive, accountable institutions and governance for development.
5. The Model gives prominence to gender equality. This will be a single cross-cutting theme, in line with SDG 5 - *Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls*. It will be reinforced with indicators at all levels of the Strategic Performance Framework.
6. Knowledge management will no longer be a separate programme, but will be integrated with Grants and the other programmes, reflecting its key role in capacity development. It will also have an enhanced role in the Foundation’s organisational development.

As in 2012-17, there is a set of critical assumptions behind progression through the theory of change. These are set out in Table 1.

¹² Page 12

¹³ The Performance Framework will be developed in the early part of 2017, as part of the operational planning for the first biennium of the 2017-2021 strategy.

Table 1 Theory of change assumptions		
	Interventions and results	Critical assumptions behind progression to the next level
Ultimate outcome	Policy, law and government institutions are more effective contributors to development through the influence of civic voices	
Intermediate outcomes	Civic voices more effective in holding institutions to account	Commitment by governments to incorporate civic voice contributions in new policy, law and the operation of institutions.
	Enhanced involvement of civic voices in policy processes	
	Public discourse shaped by civic voices	Public discourse not limited by repressive measures.
Short-term outcome	Stronger civic voices	Commitment by governments to institutionalise civic voice participation in policy processes and to provide opportunities for civic voice monitoring of performance. Civic voices have sufficient and sustained access to public discourse platforms.
Interventions	Brokering engagement between civic voices and governments	Commitment by governments to engage meaningfully.
	Strengthening civic voice capabilities	Civic voices have sufficient opportunities to apply their strengthened capabilities. Continuity of personnel in civic voice collectives.
	Supporting civic voice platforms, networks and alliances	Resources exist, outside the Foundation's contributions, for maintenance of the platforms, networks and alliances.

These, taken together with key assumptions in programme level performance frameworks, will inform the delivery and outcomes sections of the Foundation's risk register, and will be regularly monitored (and revised if necessary¹⁴).

3.6. Short term outcome: stronger civic voices

Organised civil society organisations (CSOs) are no longer the only interlocutor with government. There is an increasing demand from citizens' voices that want and need to have a direct connection with governance institutions so they can better shape development. The work of CSOs, alliances and coalitions continues to be important, but there are less-heard voices and informal collectives that remain in the margins that can

¹⁴ There will be a review of the strategic assumptions in the first biennium operational planning in March 2017.

make significant contributions to policy and accountability processes. Each of these civic perspectives has a reasonable expectation of being heard.

The consideration of different actors and change-makers in development processes has shifted the areas of engagement, often supported by technology (e.g. mobile telephony and social media). The landscape of participatory governance is already responding to this and traditional CSOs are no longer the only interface as representatives of citizens.

The Foundation will work across the spectrum of civic voices from formal CSOs, through less formal collectives to individual voices. The Foundation is uniquely placed through its creative expression programme to promote the transformative role of individuals in positively shaping public discourse to enhance people's participation in governance for development.

The Foundation will adopt a pragmatic but principled approach in engaging with traditional and non-traditional civic voices; deepening its work, balancing innovation with accountability for results. This will be governed by the criteria set out in a forthcoming Partnership Framework and at a high level by the strategic Logic Model. The key test applied by the Foundation will be whether there is a reasonable chance of the support it offers leading to constructive engagement with Government institutions. Principles in selecting civic voice partners - collectives such as CSOs and networks, or individuals such as writers - will include:

1. Civic voice collectives will have a degree of legitimacy - be representative of and responsive to the people they purport to support.
2. Civic voice collectives must already have a certain degree of competence and expertise for what they are aiming to achieve. The Foundation does not have the capacity to transform organisations from the outside.
3. The Foundation will engage with civic voices mobilising around specific policy issues, rather than for generic capacity building. The Foundation will not select/prioritise the issue(s) but will respond to the needs and demands of the environment. The feasibility of civic voice ambitions will be balanced with the ability of the Foundation to make a difference.
4. Civic voices will include people and communities whose voices are currently not given full expression in social and political processes.
5. Storytellers identified will have talent for telling stories that have "currency" in their local context, but lack access to platforms.
6. The Foundation's additionally must be demonstrated - is the help really needed from the Foundation and can it add sufficient value?
7. The potential sustainability of the intended outcomes from the civic voice efforts must be proven.

As the Logic Model shows, the Foundation will aim to strengthen civic voices - through its Grants and other Programmes, and its knowledge management and communications efforts - with three broad types of intervention:

1. Strengthening a range of civic voice capabilities relevant to effective participatory governance, and supporting the craft development of writers and other creative people to better enable them to influence public discourse.
2. Supporting civic voice platforms, networks and alliances.
3. Brokering engagement between civic voices and Government.

Integrated with these interventions - and designed to enhance their effectiveness - will be the Foundation's application of knowledge management and communications, and approaches to promoting gender equality.

The Foundation's Programmes will tailor their initiatives according to the needs of their partners and their own modalities. The following paragraphs will expand on how this is envisaged in the new strategy. Detailed work planning for the first biennium will take place in the first four months of 2017.

3.7. The Foundation's Programmes

Capacity development for constructive engagement

The Foundation will support civic voice capacity development for participatory governance and broker and facilitate constructive engagement by offering access to platforms, key policy and decision making spaces, and enhancing the interaction between civic voice collectives and government institutions. The Foundation's teams will work together in performing this role in the spirit of collaboration with, and accompaniment of, partners.

There will be greater focus on strengthening civic voice collectives for purposes such as specific policy change. The Foundation will work with organised groups and movements that have an understanding of the issues, who are already in the process of developing agendas and have a consolidated voice at the national level and in some cases at the regional level.

Constructive engagement is one of the main areas of capacity development of civic voices supported by the Foundation. This often involves facilitating initial self-assessment and on-going monitoring of capacity and needs; it also involves facilitating the development by civic voices of their strategies for strengthening their capacity in areas such as: effective and democratic decision-making; ensuring inclusivity and responsiveness to the people they represent and support, accessing, analysing and leveraging of information and knowledge; monitoring the implementation of policy, application of legislation and the performance of institutions; policy analysis, formulating and/or influencing policy agendas and advocacy using media. Capacity development may also imply changes in civic voice collectives such as the forging of alliances and coalitions.

Capacity development will enable civic voice collectives to engage with government, both for participation in policy processes and to promote accountability. Where the civic parties are prepared, the Foundation will broker and facilitate that engagement where there are opportunities and the Foundation's support is needed. The facilitation process will include wherever possible opportunities for both civic voice and governance institutions space to reflect and learn. A broad range of participation which includes constructive engagement with government and people's participation in decision making processes at different levels will strengthen civic voices. This will equip them to contribute to policy processes and accountability mechanisms. The objective is to foster constructive engagement, which enables productive interaction and dialogue.

The predominant focus on regional spaces in the previous strategy will give way to a more flexible approach, one that will be governed by a new Partnership Framework. One of the key lessons of the 2012-17 strategy is that long-standing regional CSOs are not necessarily the most agile and effective vehicles for civic voice. The regional level may still be relevant but new or alternative civic voice collectives may be more effective vehicles to support. The Foundation Programme will engage at any level, from national upwards, wherever the

Foundation assesses it can make a difference. This will include helping civic voices to bring global or regional commitments to national stages, and helping to escalate national models to the regional and/or global levels, provided that there is a real possibility of contributing to more inclusive, accountable institutions.

Strengthening a range of civic voice capabilities also includes supporting the craft development of writers and storytellers to better enable them to influence public discourse. This area of work may contribute to creating conditions for constructive engagement.

The Foundation will also take a fresh approach to civic voice engagement in Commonwealth spaces. These are predominantly regular Commonwealth Ministerial meetings - e.g. on Education, Health and Women's affairs - and the biennial Commonwealth Heads of Government (CHOGM) meeting. It is recognised that Commonwealth spaces are not policy-making forums and civic voice engagement will not directly influence policy, legislation or institutional performance. Nevertheless, there can be value in engagement in Commonwealth spaces in terms of amplifying civic voices and the development of capacity and relationships. Engagement with Ministers in these spaces may lead to further engagement at national level where traction in policy processes can take place. With limited resources in mind, the Foundation will assess the potential benefits of supporting civic voices in specific Commonwealth spaces compared with those of working elsewhere.

The Foundation will also take a fresh approach to the use of implementing partners - organisations that engage directly and regularly with civic voice collectives in facilitating capacity development. Support will be delivered through mechanisms that will be determined on a case by case basis, and more flexibly. The Foundation will engage directly and collaboratively with partners in identifying the best mechanisms.

Creative expression

Creative expression is related to every aspect of life in human society. Civic voices express in writing and other creative media, the concerns of living as they do. The Foundation's cultural initiative, known under the brand of *Commonwealth Writers*, will contribute to participatory governance by helping writers, and storytellers in the broadest sense, to influence public discourse with well-told stories around issues that matter to society.

The resultant shifts in public discourse, reflecting for example public concern about climate change or public demand for women's rights, in turn are expected to contribute to a more favourable environment for participatory governance. The Foundation's new Logic Model depicts this chain of influence.

The creative expression Programme will deliver two broad types of responses:

- Craft development of writers and other storytellers such as filmmakers, as well as translators and editors.
- Enabling writers and other storytellers to access temporary spaces and more permanent platforms, to amplify their voices and to enlarge the space in which social change is conceived and effected.

The platforms will increasingly be virtual, such as www.addastories.org the Foundation's online 'gathering of stories', where writers and readers can talk straight to each other,

across global and geopolitical divides. This displacement of the usual media power centres could have meaningful consequences for the writing itself. Here writers speak in their own voices, from their own histories, beyond the editorial appetites and dictates of the market; and readers are increasingly able to understand worlds besides their own.

Engagement with various forms of physical platform and temporary space will complement the online work, including the publication of individual pieces of fiction and non-fiction, anthologies, film screenings and face-to-face dialogue. The Commonwealth Short Story Prize is a particular example of a platform that the Foundation will continue to support. The Prize activity scopes and unearths less-heard voices and untold stories.

Creative expression will focus on strengthening, amplifying and extending the reach of the voices of talented, but less-heard storytellers. A further objective will be to show by example the demand for and value of the creative work, thereby encouraging the development of creative infrastructure in under-served places, such as Small Island Developing States.

The programme's nuanced mix of craft development, combined with the amplification of less-heard voices will enable it to contribute to public discourse by challenging established narratives and offering imaginative alternatives.

Grants

The Foundation will continue along the path of the successful transformation of its Grants programme. Prior to 2012 the Foundation was a disburser of large numbers of small, short-term subsidies. It now involves the rigorous selection and on-going support of a small number of projects of up to three years' duration and £30,000 p.a. in Foundation funding. Under the 2017-2021 strategy, all projects selected will have been designed to strengthen civic voices and support one or more of the three intermediate outcomes in the Foundation's strategic Logic Model. This will be assured through agreed project performance frameworks and subsequent monitoring and reporting.

The Grants programme will have a closer relationship with the other Foundation programmes, leading to greater synergies between them. This will be instilled through enhanced internal knowledge sharing - part of a refreshed Learning and Communications strategy - and by two other mechanisms.

- Grant calls will be preceded by a dialogue with other programme teams to determine priority areas that will shape the calls and make them more focused. The other programmes will continue to be involved in the project short-listing process.
- There will be an obligation on the Foundation's other programmes to regularly consider whether the work of any existing Grants projects could be leveraged either by taking progress made at national level under the project to the regional level, or by supporting deeper engagement at national level beyond or alongside the project.

Grants will continue to hold its successful workshops for new grant partners. There will be greater opportunities for knowledge sharing among grants partners.

Gender equality

The Foundation was ambitious in aiming to effectively mainstream three thematic areas in the 2012-17 strategy. One of the important lessons from the external evaluation is that mainstreaming themes such as gender equality involves substantial commitment of time and other resources. The new strategy will focus on gender equality and will work towards integrating gender in all of the Foundation's programmes, while ensuring that it lives up to the other two thematic areas, which will be enshrined in the Foundation's Values.

As stated above, the commitment to mainstream gender equality takes its inspiration from SDG 5 - *Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls*. The commitment will be followed through with training, the development of a programmatic guide towards gender mainstreaming that will be key to the development of programmatic and organisational development initiatives. The guide will leverage the relevant section of the Mainstreaming Toolkit, revising it to ensure that it is up-to-date and comprehensive in its focus on gender equality. The commitment will be reinforced with gender indicators - for both outputs and outcomes - in the Foundation's strategic and programme-level performance frameworks.

Knowledge management and communications

Knowledge management encompasses the capturing, curating, sharing and effectively using knowledge - both explicit and tacit. The Foundation sees knowledge management as an integral part of capacity development both for the Foundation itself and for its partners. Knowledge management will be mainstreamed pro-actively in the three programmes and play a major role in the Foundation's organisational development. It will be integrated more systematically into the overall architecture of the work and not simply added on at the end.

There will be a more systematic approach to monitoring, documenting, learning and sharing the capacity development of civic voice partners, in some cases in real time. There will be an emphasis on south-south learning for relevance. The well-received partner learning exchange will continue to be held periodically. The Foundation sees knowledge management as having sufficient in common on the one hand with monitoring and evaluation (M&E) and on the other with communications for the three areas to be integrated in a single service. Knowledge management will perform a facilitative role in M&E which will continue to be the responsibility of all staff in programmes and elsewhere. Above all the knowledge management function will help the Foundation make sense of information captured through M&E and apply it in improvement and adaptation of its existing work, and in new initiatives.

The Foundation's learning and communications strategy will be refreshed. The strategy, among other things, will look at how best to leverage the Internet - including social media - for convening people and organisations virtually, for sharing knowledge and promoting learning, helping partners to extend their reach, and for ensuring that target audiences have a good understanding of the Foundation and its work.

Relevant knowledge will be shared with wider stakeholder communities, optimising digital communications where applicable and harnessing mainstream media across the Commonwealth where possible. This will include the publication of Foundation-commissioned research on effective practice in participatory governance in the

Commonwealth which will be used as a resource for the biennial Commonwealth People's Forum among other things.

3.7. The Foundation's frameworks and sub-strategies

The Foundation's work will be guided by a set of frameworks and sub-strategies. The highest level framework is the Logic Model. This will be accompanied by a Strategic Performance Framework which links the outcomes to assumptions, indicators and means of verification (MOVs) at least up to and including the intermediate outcomes, the level at which contribution may be evaluable. Detailed work on the indicators and MOVs will take place in the first four months of 2017, but focus areas for indicators are presented in Table 2.

Table 2 Focus areas for indicators		
	Interventions and results	Indicator focus areas
Ultimate outcome	Policy, law and government institutions are more effective contributors to development through the influence of civic voices	
Intermediate outcomes	Civic voices more effective in holding institutions to account	Access to relevant information Timeliness and robustness of accountability windows. Quality of feedback to government from civic voices
	Enhanced involvement of civic voices in policy processes	Depth and frequency of participation. Attitude and behaviour of government.
	Public discourse shaped by civic voices	Changes in public discourse traceable to civic voice contributions.
Short-term outcome	Stronger civic voices	Civic voice collectives more reflective of, and responsive to, the people and communities they claim to represent or support. Civic voice collectives more capable of e.g. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • acquiring and using information • formulating policy agendas Civic voice collectives form robust alliances and networks. Storytellers' voices are "tuned". Storytellers have access to spaces and platforms that help to amplify their voices.
Interventions	Brokering engagement between civic voices and government	Perceived (by either side) relevance and quality of engagement support
	Strengthening civic voice capabilities	Perceived relevance and quality of support for network/alliances Reach of civic voice strengthening
	Supporting civic voice platforms, networks and alliances	Civic voice reach in utilisation of platforms Audience reach of platforms Perceived relevance and quality of support for network/alliances

The Foundation's Capacity Development Framework was developed and applied under the 2012-17 strategy. This will be updated before the beginning of the new strategy period to incorporate lessons from the evaluation and other experience from 2012-17, and to bring it into line with the Foundation's intent under the new strategy. The direction of travel is already clear. The following paragraphs set out the Foundation's intended approach to capacity development.

Capacity Development - a systems approach

The Foundation's Capacity Development Framework describes a holistic process that takes place at different levels of an interconnected system. The Foundation, follows the principle that "organisations and networks - whether simplex or complex - are more analogous to living organisms than they are to machines."¹⁵ Capacity development therefore involves much more than enhancing knowledge and skills of individuals. It is a process whereby civic voices strengthen, create, adapt and maintain their capacity over time to constructively transform the environment they live in¹⁶. The other facet of the Foundation's capacity development approach includes working with partners with stronger voices that are able to catalyse and shape an enabling environment.

There is no situation in which capacity does not exist, the question is whether the existing capacities are being recognized and whether the existing capacities are enabling individual, organisations and institutions to perform well in what they want to achieve¹⁷.

This view of capacity development also recognises the influence of culture and context on the ability of civic actors to engage constructively. Institutions control access through power structures and can embed inequality in multiple ways - often compounding disadvantage. Civic actors have to adapt to an enabling environment. Capacity is therefore always contextual. It can only be appropriately defined and understood in relation to the innumerable environmental and cultural factors in the context under consideration.

Context changes constantly. As a result, concepts such as participation need to be adapted to local circumstances, because how it is understood and applied in one place might be very different to how people work with it in a different setting. Local leadership is critical to capacity development initiatives at the point of implementation. The Foundation also includes within the concept of capacity development: the strengthening of processes and mechanisms for consciousness-raising and engagement; creation and co-creation of new and existing platforms; enabling access to these platforms; enhancing and amplifying civic voices.

Other frameworks and sub-strategies

The Foundation will develop a Partnership Framework which will clarify the types of partner the Foundation will seek to work with and the criteria for selecting them. It will also define ways of working with partners that reflect the Foundation's ethos and values. The Foundation's Learning and Communications strategy will also be refreshed in 2017.

¹⁵ Capacity, Change and Performance, Policy Management Brief, No. 22, European Centre for Development Policy Management (ECDPM), March 2009, page 2.

¹⁶ The challenge of Capacity Development: Working Towards Good Practice, OECD, 2006, page 12.

¹⁷ Capacity Development, Institutional Change and Theory of Change: What do we mean and where are the linkages, Hettie Walters, November 2007, page 1

3.8. The Foundation's Enabling Platform

Apart from the three Programmes, the Foundation operates through a set of enabling services, collectively known in the new strategy as the *Enabling Platform*. These are

- Human resources
- Finance
- Operations
- Leadership

These services are not exclusively inward-facing. In varying degrees, they engage with outside as well as internal stakeholders. Leadership for example has prime responsibility for forging and maintaining partnerships whose scope extends beyond a specific programme or project, and for relationships with the Foundation's Board of Governors. Other services engage with suppliers, relationships with whom are very important for the Foundation's effectiveness.

During the 2012-17 strategy period, the Foundation developed an outcomes-led performance framework for its enabling services and the internally-facing aspects of knowledge management and communications. Each service contributed to one or more of a set of seven outcomes. These were:

1. The Foundation secures an optimum level of resources;
2. Staff perform well;
3. Resources are used efficiently;
4. The Foundation has a learning culture and practices;
5. The Foundation forges and maintains effective partnerships;
6. Perceptions of the Foundation are constructive;
7. Governors are equipped to be effective.

Identifying outcomes for the enabling services has been shown to help staff see the relevance of their contribution to the overall effectiveness of the Foundation.

In the new strategy these enabling outcomes will be retained with an amendment to outcome 4 to reflect the enhanced role of knowledge management in organisational development. Enabling outcome 4 will now read: *The Foundation has a learning culture and practices and collaboration among Foundation staff is enhanced.*

Human resources, finance and operations

The new strategy is foreseen as a period of consolidation for these services, following several years of substantial change. Human resources for example will concentrate on staff development and link with a broader commitment to making the Foundation a learning organisation. Finance and operations will continue to promote both quality and efficiency. The Board has determined that four in every five pounds that the Foundation spends should go towards achieving programme outcomes. This was achieved and improved on during the 2012-2017 strategy period and the organisation will continue to make progress on this front by regularly reviewing support costs and seeking best value. As with other programmes and services, these three will work with performance indicators.

Leadership

Priorities for the Foundation's leadership will balance internal needs with external imperatives. Internally the Foundation's directorate will continue to nurture a learning

environment and commitment to continuous improvement. Externally, emphasis will be placed on drawing on the Foundation's results and impact to retain and attract partners in support of the mission.

One of the primary responsibilities of leadership is to forge and maintain strategic partnerships and others that are not specific to other colleagues' programmes and services. These partners include funders, other Commonwealth bodies, with the Secretariat as the most prominent example, and knowledge partners and potential collaborators among the wider IGO community, INGOs and think tanks. The Foundation will seek to initiate a new dialogue with the Commonwealth Secretariat about the nature and modalities of partnerships early in 2017.

3.9. The Foundation's Governance

The new strategy will consolidate three recent changes that are designed to deepen the relationship between the Foundation and its Governing Board.

1. The Foundation has established the practice of surveying the Board to help gauge perceptions and assess the quality of service that they are provided with. This will inform new ways of meeting Governors' needs.
2. The Foundation is responding to requests from Board members for opportunities for more informal dialogue.
3. The institution of Civil Society Advisory Governors presents a new opportunity to improve the quality of dialogue between civic and governmental stakeholders about the Foundation's priorities.

3.10. Results based management in the Foundation

The Foundation will continue to commit to the effective use of results based management (RBM) frameworks and processes. The main frameworks will be:

1. The strategic Logic Model with the related assumptions - constituting the Foundation's theory of change.
2. A strategic performance framework with indicators and means of verification.
3. Biennial plans and performance frameworks at programme and service level.
4. An organisation-wide risk framework.

Important RBM processes will include:

1. Alignment of organisational structure and resourcing with the Logic Model.
2. Monitoring of performance, outcomes and the external environment including risks.
3. Early, mid and end-year whole-of-organisation workshops for performance and risk review and adaptation.
4. Annual reporting against the performance frameworks illustrated with valid narratives.
5. A strategy evaluation timed to inform the new strategic planning process.

The Foundation will continue to improve its application of RBM to support a focus on outcomes as well as quality interventions, and generate effective learning and reporting to stakeholders. The Foundation will ensure that RBM supports adaptive approaches to planning and management given the complexity and dynamism of the environments in which it works.

The Foundation is also developing a more focussed and systematic approach to project cycle management which will be applied in full in the new strategy. All programme work will be translated into projects, with rigorous planning, focused performance frameworks, consistent application of the monitoring of outputs, outcomes, assumptions and risks as well as activities, and regular evidence-informed review. This will lead to improved reporting to stakeholders and knowledge facilitation.

The Foundation will submit current partnership projects to a similar appraisal process, and if they are found to be weak, review and if necessary trigger an orderly exit strategy.

The Foundation will continue to apply its comprehensive risk framework. The task of populating the register of risks is devolved to managers with responsibility for each area of delivery. The register is reviewed and where appropriate updated three times a year by staff.

3.11. The Foundation's resourcing

The Foundation is principally funded by assessed contributions made by its 45 member Governments. The assessed contributions, along with other income such as project-specific funding received as grants to the Foundation, provide the resources for the annual budget which is approved by the Board of Governors. Performance-based budgeting has resulted in a more integrated approach to allocating resources across the organisation, with activity-based budgeting undertaken by management and staff as part of its annual planning and budgeting cycle.

The Foundation's fiscal year runs from 1 July to 30 June. The Foundation's resources are allocated to the Grants programme, other Programmes' initiatives, and to management and support costs. The allocation of resources is based on expected outcomes and outputs and the financial, human and materials commitments required to achieve these outputs. The Foundation is committed to allocating £1 million annually to the Grants programme, which is awarded in line with guidelines in support of the Foundation's priorities.

The resources expended during the year are audited annually by a chartered accounting firm appointed by the Audit Committee, a sub-committee of the Board. The audited financial statements are prepared in accordance with the International Financial Reporting Standards issued by the International Accounting Standard Board. The accounts are approved and signed by the Director of the Foundation on behalf of the Board of Governors.

The Foundation will continue to adopt a measured approach to attracting income additional to member government contributions. In such a small organisation, pursuit of project funding, and its management if secured, can divert human resources from the organisation's planned interventions. Where opportunities present themselves, they will be assessed for their fit with the Foundation's Logic Model, Partnership Framework and other elements of the Strategy, and for the Foundation's ability to deploy human resources without detracting materially from its planned interventions.

Annex A

The Foundation's Vision, Mission and Values in the 2012-2017 Strategy

Vision

“A world where every person is able to fully participate in and contribute to the sustainable development of a peaceful and equitable society”

Mission

“To develop the capacity of Civil Society to act together and learn from each other to engage with the institutions that shape people's lives”

Core Values

Diversity

Recognising that the plurality of the Commonwealth lies at the heart of its strength, the Commonwealth Foundation will respect the diversity of the people of the Commonwealth in fulfilling its mission. It is committed to the equality of opportunity for all and to respect for difference.

Collaboration

Recognising that effective, responsive and accountable governance requires the inputs of all stakeholders, the Commonwealth Foundation will share the learning generated by the participation of Civil Society. It is committed to inspiring dialogue from the bottom up, promoting consultations, building consensus, facilitating convergence, forging partnerships and engaging diverse stakeholders in participatory governance.

Integrity

Recognising that intergovernmental organisations are publicly funded and answerable to their member states, the Commonwealth Foundation will act in a thoroughly transparent manner in all its undertakings. It is committed to demonstrating accountability to both governments and Civil Society. It pursues its mission with commitment, discipline and rigour.

Ingenuity

Recognising the scale and scope of the challenges facing Commonwealth people and their organisations, the Commonwealth Foundation acknowledges the requirement to be innovative in its responses. It is committed to acting as a catalyst that brings stakeholders together to generate creative and innovative solutions and promote thoughtful analysis and learning.

Annex B The Foundation’s final Logic Model under the 2012-2017 Strategy

Commonwealth Foundation 2012-2017 Logic Model

ULTIMATE OUTCOME	More effective, responsive and accountable governance with civil society participation			
INTERMEDIATE OUTCOME	Enhanced collaboration and learning between CSOs and institutions in governance			
SHORT-TERM OUTCOMES	1 increased public dialogue through creative expression	2 Enhanced capacity of regional CSOs and networks/alliances to engage in participatory governance	3 Enhanced interaction between regional CSOs and networks/alliances and institutions in governance	4 Enhanced knowledge management for more effective participatory governance
FOCUS	Facilitate unique contributions to public discourse by the creative sectors with a focus on less-heard voices	Develop CSO capacity for PG specifically in policy development and advocacy	Increase access to, and improve, existing spaces; and create new spaces	Develop KM mechanisms, and facilitate their adoption
ENABLING OUTCOME: a more effective Commonwealth Foundation				

Annex C External Evaluation of the 2012-17 Strategy: Principal Findings and Conclusions

Overall summary

The Foundation has made good progress in putting together the building blocks of a successful strategy. It has developed good policy and performance frameworks; established competent teams that have gained the respect of partners for their professionalism and approach to partnership; developed a wide range of programme activities in line with the strategy; and demonstrated some early signs of positive outcomes.

Partners affirm that the Foundation's principal objective of participatory governance remains relevant although there is not a strong consensus on how best and what level civil society can most effectively engage with governance.

Creative expression

The creative expression programme known as *Commonwealth Writers* has helped to bring narratives relevant to marginalised populations into the mainstream by the publication of individual short stories and anthologies from emerging writers and the dissemination of other creative products on its website and other platforms. There is little evidence however that these creative products contribute directly to participatory governance e.g. in terms of policy influence. Anticipating this finding of the evaluation, Commonwealth Writers has evolved during the strategy period from a focus on increasing the capacity of CSOs to contribute to participatory governance, to supporting the creative sectors to enable 'less heard voices' to be heard in public discourse.

The Commonwealth Short Story Prize was launched to reach out to 'less- heard' voices" by increasing the number and diversity of entries from emerging writers across the Commonwealth. The initiative was welcomed by nearly all collaborators and the number of entries and countries involved in the Prize has increased significantly since 2012. While the total number of entries has stabilised since 2014, the programme's outreach activities have helped to increase the number of translated entries and first-time authors who have been short-listed. Short-listed entries dealing with the realities of life facing marginal or vulnerable populations are being given a wider audience through *Granta* - the magazine of new writing - and other public platforms.

The partnership approach of Commonwealth Writers and its support for craft development is much valued by collaborators. Commonwealth Writers is seen as a strong 'brand'. It has succeeded in building an international reputation in cultural circles.

Civil society capacity development

The Foundation has supported the capacity development of four regional civil society platforms during the strategy period - in the Caribbean, West Africa, East and Southern Africa - with different levels of success. It helped to establish and supported the Caribbean Civil Society Working Group (CCWG) which is developing a policy position on sustainable energy that will be considered at the CARICOM Council for Trade and Economic Development (COTED). It has also recently helped to establish the Southern African Alliance on Youth Employment (SAAYE) which is in the early stages of developing a policy position on youth employment. Institutional weaknesses affecting the legitimacy and representativeness of the regional civil society consultative bodies in West and East Africa

have hindered progress. Regional partners considered the regional approach appropriate but several emphasised that it needs to be complemented by national level engagement.

The Foundation has had more immediate success in its role in ‘catalysing’ new regional civil society platforms than it has had in resolving entrenched, institutional challenges in West and East Africa. This raises the issue of whether the Foundation - as a comparatively small, long distance funder - is able to resolve such embedded issues, despite its unique role as an inter-governmental organisation (IGO).

The Foundation has sought to facilitate South-South learning as part of the programme. The Partner Learning Exchange, is highly regarded by partners. However, the inter-regional initiative to support knowledge sharing and collaboration on the SIDS Accelerated Modalities of Action (SAMOA) Pathway between Caribbean Policy Development Centre (CPDC) and Pacific Islands Association of Non-Governmental Organisations (PIANGO) has made little progress to date

Constructive engagement

The Foundation has supported civil society engagement with global, Commonwealth, regional and national levels of governance. The Foundation’s status as an IGO was reported as ‘opening doors’ to give civil society access to other IGOs although access does not equate with influence. There are a number of successful examples of this. These include the discussions between African CSOs and member state Permanent Representatives in New York prior to the UN discussions on the Sustainable Development Goals; the initial and planned meetings of CCWG with COTED in the Caribbean; the policy work of Eastern African Sub-regional Support Initiative for the Advancement of Women (EASSI) with the East Africa Community (EAC); and the unprecedented policy discussions with Ministers and senior officials at the Commonwealth People’s Forum (CPF) in 2015. However, these advances have not been accompanied by more formalised commitments to civil society consultation by the regional and Commonwealth governance bodies.

Some respondents queried the effectiveness of civil society engagement with policy-making processes in the Commonwealth. There is little evidence that established arrangements for civil society engagement in Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting (CHOGM) and Commonwealth Inter-Ministerial meetings is likely to result in substantive policy influence at Commonwealth and subsequently at national level.

Knowledge management

Knowledge-sharing plays a pivotal role in the Foundation’s interpretation of its mission. The Foundation has put in place the key elements of a learning culture - incorporating learning in reporting templates, establishing web-based knowledge resources; experimenting with knowledge products; and promoting learning exchanges that have been highly rated by partners. Most staff perceive the Foundation to offer a learning environment although there is a need for more informal, peer learning opportunities.

The Foundation has also produced and disseminated some knowledge products. It has developed and used the Participatory and Transparency Tool (PATT) which has been positively received by partners and is currently developing a new Network Assessment tool. Three Commonwealth Insights on participatory governance have been published and five case studies from the Grants programme have recently been produced.

Cross-cutting outcomes

The Strategy commitment to three Cross-Cutting Outcomes (CCOs) has been insufficiently integrated into organisational systems and processes to enable the Foundation to report on their progress. A Toolkit on mainstreaming CCOs was produced in 2014 but no mechanism has been put in place to systematically review and implement these commitments. CCOs are not adequately incorporated into planning and reporting templates, although the Grants programme has made some progress in this area.

An informal staff lead on gender has led to some staff workshops on gender-related issues that have contributed to staff acknowledging a growing awareness of gender equity issues.

Grants

40 grants were awarded during the evaluation period, only a handful of which has been completed. The internal project scoring system is applied only to completed grants therefore it is not possible to be definitive about the effectiveness and impact of Grants as a whole in the strategy period. Nonetheless a significant proportion of grants reviewed show progress at outcome level. Many of these outcomes were within the direct ‘sphere of influence’ of the project e.g. increased awareness or skills of target populations. There are fewer examples of outcomes in terms of responsive governance although there are some early examples of civil society constructively engaging at national and local level.

The Grants programme is efficiently administered and provides diligent scrutiny of and feedback on project narrative and financial reporting. Project oversight is conducted with an ethos of partnership and flexibility which partners value highly. Grantees report that the grantee induction workshop and staff feedback on reporting have improved their capacity to monitor, implement and report on their projects.

A more effective Foundation

The Foundation should have confidence to build on the lessons of its early programming to develop a tighter focus and play to its strengths in the next strategy period. Key stakeholders suggested that the new strategy should align itself with the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. The SDG 16 focus on “Inclusive Societies” is compatible with its current focus on participatory governance and would encourage the potential for strategic partnerships. The time is right to initiate a strategic dialogue with the Commonwealth Secretariat on the complementary roles they can play as inter-governmental organisations in delivering the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

The Foundation’s theory of change forms the basis of its Outcome Performance Framework (OPF). The new strategy should include a theory of change that incorporates all programme areas contributing to outcomes, including the Grants programme. Short-term outcomes should be realistic to achieve within the strategy period. The OPF has been frequently revised, and there has been some discontinuity between the OPF and annual reporting. A more systematic approach to reporting to work plan indicators would provide a more robust framework of accountability for the Foundation, while enabling shorter and more readable annual reports.

While the Civil Society Engagement Strategy sets out a theoretical framework for the Outcome Area programmes, they would benefit from a more systematic approach to programme development. This is currently being reviewed and should enable the

Foundation to design, implement and monitor its programme initiatives more transparently and effectively.

There is considerable overlap in the work of the Outcome Area 2 and 3 teams, particularly at regional level where there some risk of duplication of effort. The Foundation should consider how best to deploy the two teams once the programmatic objectives of the new strategy are clarified.

A key challenge will be how best to focus programme objectives so as to enable civil society to bring about change through constructive engagement. More focused strategic objectives would improve the Foundation's effectiveness by ensuring objectives are commensurate with available resources, enabling the Foundation to follow through on initiatives during the strategy period and beyond, and facilitating more effective knowledge sharing. It will be a challenge for the Foundation to make strategic choices to improve impact while managing the expectation that it spreads its work across member states.

Key stakeholders suggested that the new strategy should align itself with the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. The SDG 16 focus on "Inclusive Societies" is compatible with its current focus on participatory governance and would encourage the potential for strategic partnerships.