

Frequently asked questions

Eligibility and guidelines

1. Is my organisation eligible to apply?

To be eligible for a grant under this call, the following criteria must be met:

1. The applicant must be a not-for-profit civil society organisation (CSO) registered in an eligible Commonwealth Foundation member country. (See [here](#) for the list of eligible member countries).
2. Newly registered organisations (those that have been registered and operating for less than three years) are not eligible to apply.
3. The proposed project must be implemented in the country of registration. Projects can be implemented in one or more eligible Commonwealth Foundation member countries and can have a national, sub-national, regional, or international remit. In multi-country projects, strong local participation in project implementation is required (see further information on partnerships below).
4. The project must seek to facilitate change through constructive engagement between civil society and decision-makers, including civil society participation in policy development and decision-making, within one or more of the Foundation's priority themes (see Question three, below).
5. The applicant organisation must have a minimum of three years' demonstrable experience working on participatory governance and advocacy within the area/theme(s) of the proposed project.
6. The total grant amount requested must be a minimum of £15,000 or between £15,001 and £30,000 per year, and for a maximum of two years. (Note there are different requirements depending on the requested grant amount, see further Question five, below. / "How to apply" within the *Guidelines*).
7. The requested grant amount should not exceed 70% of the applicant organisation's total annual income, averaged over the past two years.
8. The annual income of the applicant organisation, averaged over the past two years, must be less than £2.5m.
9. The project proposal must address at least one of the notified priority themes as set out in Question Three, below.

10. The project proposal must demonstrate appropriate integration of gender considerations. For example, the applicant may use the findings of gender analysis to inform the design of the project proposal and/or ensure the allocation of adequate resources to effectively address gender equality in the project cycle.
11. Applicant organisations that are currently implementing or have recently completed a Commonwealth Foundation Grant but have not received their final payment, are not eligible to apply.
12. Proposals must relate to projects that are expected to begin after 1 August 2025 and before the end of September 2025.

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

2. What documents should we submit with our application?

All applicants must submit a completed online application form. All applications must include the following additional documentation:

1. A logic model (using the template provided).
2. A copy of the organisation's registration certificate. This should be a clear scan of an official registration document provided by the relevant authorities in the country where the applicant organisation is registered. If the registration certificate does not clearly state that the organisation is not-for-profit, please add other documentation which can be used as evidence of your organisation's status as a not-for-profit (for example articles of association). When the original registration certificates are not in English, shortlisted applications can be expected to be asked to provide a certified translation.
3. If you are based in India, you should be compliant with the Foreign Contribution Registration Act (FCRA) or have preparations in place to obtain a valid FCRA Registration to legally receive charitable funding from outside sources.
4. For grants of £15,000 per year: The applicant organisation may choose to submit either the latest audited accounts or a copy of the organisation's most recent annual accounts. Annual accounts must include a balance sheet, a profit and loss statement and notes about the account. They must be signed by the organisation's Board or its principal executive officer. Audited accounts or annual accounts must not be older than December 2022.
5. For grants exceeding £15,000 per year: a copy of the organisation's most recent audited accounts is required. Note that audited accounts must include both the accounts and the opinion of the external auditor who has certified them. They must be signed off by the auditor and the organisation's Board or its principal executive officer. They should not be older than December 2022.

Additional information on accounts is provided under headings five, six and seven, below. Note that incomplete applications will not be considered.

3. What type of projects is the Commonwealth Foundation seeking to fund?

Under this call, we are looking to support projects that seek to facilitate constructive engagement between civil society and government, including civil society participation in policy development and decision making. The call is focusing on three priority themes: (i) health justice; (ii) climate justice; and (iii) freedom of expression. Projects must address one or more of these three themes. Possible areas of focus within the priority themes can be found in the Call guidelines. All projects are required to integrate considerations of gender into their design and implementation.

4. Can we apply for funding in relation to a project that has already started?

The Foundation appreciates that CSOs interested in applying for a grant may already be doing significant work that falls within the parameters of this grants call and that would benefit from support for expansion and/or continuation of that work. We are therefore willing to consider supporting initiatives that are not 'new' but an additional component or extension of an existing initiative.

If funding is being sought in relation to an existing initiative, this should be indicated in the application. In such cases, the applicant should clearly explain why the additional component/work is important and the impact that it will have. For applications under this category that reach the shortlisting stage, the Foundation will likely request additional information on the project including its source of funding and evidence of results secured thus far.

5. What kind of audit report do we need to submit?

For grants exceeding £15,000 per year, applicants are required to submit a copy of the organisation's most recent audited accounts. (Grant applications of up to £15,000 may choose to submit either audited accounts or annual accounts as detailed in question two above). Audited accounts must include both the accounts and the opinion of the external auditor who has certified them. They must be signed off by the auditor and the organisation's Board or its principal executive officer. They should not be older than December 2022.

Project audits and independently verified accounts will not be accepted in place of the organisation's audited accounts. Audited accounts for an affiliated organisation registered in a different country will not be accepted.

6. What kind of annual accounts do we need to submit?

For grants of £15,000 per year, the applicant organisation may choose to submit either their audited accounts (see Question five above for requirements) or a copy of the organisation's most recent annual accounts. Annual accounts must include a balance sheet, a profit and loss statement and notes about the account. They must be signed off by the organisation's Board or its principal executive officer. Audited or annual accounts must not be older than December 2022.

7. Can we submit the audited accounts/annual accounts after we have submitted the application?

No. The required financial documentation must be submitted together with the application form. Incomplete applications will not be considered.

8. Can an organisation apply for funding for a project that is to be implemented in a country that is not the country of the registration?

For applications that have more than one partner, the lead applicant must be registered in the country where the project will be implemented. Partner organisations can be registered or operating in a different Commonwealth Foundation member country to where the project will be implemented (please refer to the full list of eligible countries: <https://commonwealthfoundation.com/grants>).

9. Are partnerships part of the selection criteria?

No. Applicants do not need to nominate a partner. The Foundation does however encourage applicants to consider carefully how they can leverage partnerships (nominated or not) to enhance the scale, depth, and breadth of their work.

Where partners are nominated, the Foundation expects to include them in conversations, discussions, and capacity development activities once projects are approved. (Note that if any proposed partners are registered organisations in the country of implementation, their registration certificates should also be provided as part of the application.)

10. Who can we partner with?

Partners do not need to be registered or to fulfil the other formal requirements set out above. They can be not-for-profit community-based organisations/groups, informal alliances, social movements, individual activists, as well as artists, such as musicians, writers, poets, or performers whose contribution to the project will strengthen its impact.

11. Can two or more organisations submit an application?

Yes, two or more organisations may apply for funding. However, one organisation must be nominated as the lead applicant and the other(s) must be identified as partner(s). The lead applicant will conclude the grant agreement with the Commonwealth Foundation and will accrue all relevant rights and responsibilities under that agreement.

12. Can an organisation be an applicant in one application and a partner in another? Or a partner in more than one application?

No. An organisation can only be included in one application (see 14. below).

13. Can an organisation apply for more than one grant?

No. An organisation can only apply for one grant under this call.

14. Can an organisation that has been awarded a grant by the Commonwealth Foundation (as either lead applicant or partner) apply for another grant under this call as either a lead applicant or a partner?

Organisations that have previously received a grant from the Foundation may apply for a grant under this call provided the project that they were a lead applicant or partner in has come to an end. This means that all final reports have been received and approved by the Foundation at the time of submission of the application for a new grant. As the Foundation is seeking to support as many organisations as possible across the Commonwealth, priority is generally given to organisations that have not previously received a grant.

15. We are planning to partner with another organisation whose average total income is more than £2 million. Does that affect eligibility?

No. The income requirement relates to the lead applicant only.

16. Can a government or business entity be a partner in the project?

No. Partners nominated by an applicant should not be government or business entities. However, the Foundation does welcome informal collaborations—including with government and the private sector—that might enhance the project's effectiveness and impact.

17. Can a project funded under this call provide training or other support to government officials?

No. While the Foundation is seeking to support constructive engagement with Government, project funds cannot be used to provide training to government officials. If such training is considered necessary for project aims, an alternative source of funding for those costs should be secured and this should be explained clearly in the application.

18. How do grantees monitor and report on their projects?

Once a grant is awarded, the Foundation requires grantees to develop a monitoring plan for their project. We work with grantees to develop such a plan using simplified versions of the Results Based Management and Outcome Harvesting methodologies that we use for all our work.

For projects of one year duration, grantees are required to provide an end of project report and a corresponding financial report. For projects of more than one year duration, grantees are required to provide an annual report and financial report and, at the end of the project, an end of project report and corresponding financial report.

Reporting schedules will be agreed between the grant partner and the Foundation and set out in the grant agreement.

19. Why is my country not included in the list of eligible countries?

The Foundation's Member States have agreed that this call is restricted to civil society organisations in countries that are members of the Foundation in good financial standing and further, to those countries where the need for civil society support is the greatest. The list of eligible countries for this call can be found [here](#).

20. Can I use project funds to support my organisation, or must they only be used for project activities?

This is a call for specific project proposals. It means that the budget which is submitted must relate to the costs that will be incurred in implementing the proposed project.

The Foundation does appreciate the importance of strengthening organisational capacity. Those applicants whose projects are shortlisted will therefore be invited to propose capacity strengthening initiatives as part of their project's budget, costed at up to 5% of the grant amount requested. These funds can be used to cover organisational needs that are broader than the project but that help to enhance organisational effectiveness.

Note there is no need to include capacity development proposals in the firststage application.

21. Are there examples of projects funded in the past that I might look at?

Past and current projects funded by the Commonwealth Foundation can be found on our website: commonwealthfoundation.com/projects

While these provide a good overview, applicants should be aware that requirements and focus areas differ from year to year, and it is important to carefully consider the specificities of this call.

THE APPLICATION PROCESS

1. How do I apply for a grant?

To apply you will first need to login into your SurveyMonkey Apply account and complete and submit an online application form. Only completed applications that have been submitted using the online application system will be considered.

2. Can I submit an application via email or post?

No. Only applications submitted using the online application system will be considered.

3. Who are SurveyMonkey Apply?

Survey Monkey Apply are the providers of the online platform we are using for grant applications.

4. I don't have a SurveyMonkey Apply account; how do I get one?

You can find out how to register for an account [here](#).

5. I've applied for a Commonwealth Foundation grant in the past, do I still need to create an account?

No. You should already have an account. Please log in using your email address and password. If you have forgotten your password, follow the guidance provided on screen to set a new one.

6. Who do I contact if I can't log into my account?

If you have login problems, please send an email to:
cfgrants@commonwealth.int

7. Why am I receiving emails from noreply@mail.smapply.io

This is the email address from SurveyMonkey Apply, the providers of the grants online application system. All emails relating to the submission of your grant application will be sent from this email address. **Please do not reply to this email address as it's not monitored.** Send any queries to cfgrants@commonwealth.int and a staff member of the Foundation will get back to you.

8. What do I do if I have problems with my application?

Please send email to: **cfgrants@commonwealth.int** and a staff member of the Foundation will assist you. We strongly advise that applicants requiring help reach out to us as soon as possible. Last-minute requests for help may not be responded to in time, and you could miss the deadline. Submission after the deadline is not possible and you should not rely on people being available to assist in the final days.

9. How do I know if my application was successfully submitted?

Filling in the application form does not automatically submit it. Please make sure that after you fill in the application form you go back to the main application screen and click on the submit button to submit your application.

You will receive an email from **noreply@mail.smapply.io** acknowledging receipt of your application soon after it is submitted. If you do not receive this acknowledgement email one of three things may have happened:

- a. your application was not successfully submitted
- b. the email was sent to a different email that was provided in the form
- c. your email is in your spam box

Please check out all these options and if you are still experiencing problems contact the grants team at **cfgrants@commonwealth.int**

10. When will I find out if my application was successful?

Shortlisted applicants will be contacted by Foundation staff by the end of February 2025. These applicants will be invited to provide further information in support of their application, including a detailed project budget.

Shortlisted applicants will be informed of the result of their application by the end of June 2025, and it is expected that grant agreements will be concluded soon thereafter, allowing for implementation to begin as soon as possible in the third quarter of 2025 (August-September)