



OPEN CALL GRANTS 2026–2027 FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

RENEWED STRATEGIC DIRECTION: UPDATES TO OPEN CALL GRANTS

1.1 What has changed this year?

In response to the Foundation's new strategic plan, the 2026–2027 open call marks an evolution in how the Foundation supports communities, collectives and creative practitioners. Our **Individual Organisation Grants** will continue the work of our previous open call grants by providing support for projects delivered by civil society organisations, including creative organisations. From this year, we will also provide support for networks, coalitions, alliances, platforms and creative collectives through our **Collective Action Grants**.

1.2 Can I apply for an Individual Organisation Grant AND a Collective Action Grant?

No. An organisation, network or collective may only be included in one application under this open call, whether as a lead applicant or partner.

1.3 Can we deliver in partnership?

Yes. Partnerships are welcome where they enhance the scale, depth, reach, or impact of the proposed work. For a Collective Action Grant, partners are defined as those directly involved in delivering the work; you do not need to list every member of the network or collective.

1.4 Do partners need to be registered?

No. While the applicant or lead applicant must meet the relevant registration requirements and be registered in an eligible Commonwealth Foundation member country, partners may be registered civil society or creative organisations, grassroots or community-based groups, informal groups, social movements, networks, artists, storytellers, creative practitioners or advocates. An Individual Organisation Grant may be delivered by the applicant organisation alone or in partnership. The lead applicant should explain each partner's role and contribution.

1.5 Can I partner with unregistered organisations, actors or collectives?

Yes. However, the grant agreement will be with the registered applicant or lead applicant, which will be responsible for the funding and delivery of the project.

1.6 I am an artist (creative actor or creative practitioner). How can I engage?

If you are a member of a registered organisation, non-for-profit organisation, you can apply to either type of grant as long as you meet the eligibility criteria. You can also be a partner in a proposal that uses creative advocacy to advance one or more of the Foundation's strategic impact areas.

1.7 What is creative advocacy?

Creative advocacy is the intentional use of creative practices to influence public discourse, policy, behaviours or decision-making in pursuit of positive social, cultural or political change.

1.8 What should creative organisations or collectives submit?

Submit a small selection of previous or current work that demonstrates your creative practice and its relevance to the project. Use one or a combination of the following: up to six images, up to five minutes of video or audio, up to five pages of writing or other relevant material, or links to digital, interactive or web-based work. For each example, provide the title, date, your role and a short description of no more than 75 words.

You do not need to create a new portfolio for this application. Existing documentation is welcome, and production quality will not be assessed. If the work was collaborative, briefly explain your contribution.

You may include a link to a wider portfolio, but assessors will only be expected to review the material submitted within these limits.

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. For a Collective Action Grant, the applicant must be a not-for-profit network, coalition, alliance or platform of civil society organisations, community-based organisations, groups, creative actors or creative collectives, registered in an eligible Commonwealth Foundation member country. The list of eligible countries can be found at: commonwealthfoundation.com/grants. An unregistered network or collective must nominate an eligible registered member organisation as the lead applicant.
2. For an Individual Organisation Grant, the applicant must be a not-for-profit civil society organisation or creative organisation registered in an eligible Commonwealth Foundation member country.
3. Newly registered organisations, networks, coalitions or collectives that have been registered and operating for less than three years are not eligible to apply.
4. The proposed project must be implemented in the applicant's or lead applicant's country of registration but may also include activities in additional eligible Commonwealth Foundation member countries. Projects can have a national, sub-national, regional or international remit. For multi-country projects, strong local participation in each country of implementation is required.
5. The project must seek to advance at least one of the Foundation's strategic impact areas (freedom of expression, economic inclusion, or climate and environmental justice) through constructive engagement between civil society and governments or other decision-makers and/or the use of creative practice to influence public discourse or decision-making, policy or behaviours in pursuit of positive social, cultural, or political

change (creative advocacy).

6. The applicant, network or collective must have at least three years' demonstrable experience relevant to the proposed project and strategic impact area, as well as significant experience in the communities where the project will be delivered.
7. The grant requested must be between £15,000 and £20,000 per year **for a Collective Action Grant**, or between £15,000 and £30,000 per year for an **Individual Organisation Grant**.
8. Grants may be requested for a maximum of two years.
9. The requested grant amount should not exceed 70% of the applicant's or lead applicant's average annual income over the past two years.
10. The applicant's or lead applicant's average annual income over the past two years must be less than £2.5 million.
11. The proposal must demonstrate how gender and intersectionality have informed its design and will be integrated throughout implementation, including consideration of factors such as age, disability, race, ethnicity, socio-economic status and geographical location.
12. Organisations that are currently implementing a Commonwealth Foundation grant, or have recently completed a grant but have not yet received their final payment, are not eligible to apply.
13. Applications should relate to projects that are expected to begin between 1 August 2027 and 30 September 2027.

2. What documents should we submit with our application?

1. A logic model (using the template provided).
2. A clear copy of the applicant's or lead applicant's registration certificate. If it does not state that the entity is not-for-profit, include other evidence such as articles of association. Shortlisted applicants whose original documents are not in English will be expected to provide a certified translation.
3. A document listing the names, roles, responsibilities and contact details of the applicant's or lead applicant's board members or trustees. If there is no board or trustee structure, upload the relevant governance structure, including roles and responsibilities.
4. Applicants based in India should comply with the Foreign Contribution Regulation Act (FCRA), or have preparations in place to obtain valid FCRA registration to receive charitable funding from outside India.
5. For grants of **exactly £15,000** per year, the applicant may choose to submit either the latest audited accounts or the most recent annual accounts. Annual accounts must include a balance sheet, profit and loss statement and notes, and be signed off by the Board or principal executive officer. The accounts must not be older than December 2024.
6. For grants **exceeding £15,000** per year, the applicant must submit the most recent audited accounts, including the accounts and the external auditor's opinion. They must be signed by the auditor and the Board or principal executive officer and must not be older than December 2024.
7. Collective Action Grant applicants must also provide the collective's structure, governance, secretariat organisation where applicable, and a full list of current members. Creative organisations and collectives must provide the required portfolio or equivalent digital evidence.
8. All organisational and financial documents must relate to the same legal entity named as the lead applicant.

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

The Foundation will support projects advancing one or more of three strategic impact areas: freedom of expression; economic inclusion; and climate and environmental justice. Priority will be given to applications that facilitate constructive engagement between civic actors, governments and other decision-makers and/or use creative advocacy. All projects must integrate gender and intersectionality into their design and implementation.

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

The Foundation may support work that is not entirely new but builds on, extends or adds a component to an existing initiative that meets the open call grants criteria. Applicants should identify existing work in the application and explain the value and expected impact

of the proposed extension. **If the applicant is not a creative organisation or collective, a creative advocacy component added to an existing project will not be considered for funding.**

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

For grants exceeding £15,000 per year, applicants must submit their most recent audited accounts, including the accounts and the external auditor's opinion. They must be signed by the auditor and the Board or principal executive officer and must not be older than December 2024.

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 exactly £15,000 per year, applicants may submit audited accounts or their most recent annual accounts. Annual accounts must include a balance sheet, profit and loss statement and notes, be signed off by the Board or principal executive officer, and must not be older than December 2024.

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 registration?

The project must be implemented in the applicant's or lead applicant's country of registration, but may also include activities in other eligible Commonwealth Foundation member countries. Strong local participation is required in each country of implementation.

9. Are partnerships part of the selection criteria?

Partnerships are not compulsory, but the Foundation welcomes grant applications for partnerships that aim to enhance the scale, depth, reach or impact of the proposed work. Please note that partners do not have to be registered organisations. They may include not-for-profit community-based organisations/groups, informal alliances, social movements, individual activists or creatives such as artists, musicians, writers, poets or performers' activities.

Applicants should clearly explain each partner's role and contribution. If a proposed partner is a registered organisation in a country of implementation, its registration certificate should be submitted with an Individual Organisation Grant application; for Collective Action Grants, certificates for registered partners will be requested if the application is shortlisted.

10. Who can we partner with?

Partners may include registered civil society or creative organisations, grassroots or community-based groups, informal groups, social movements, networks, artists, storytellers, creative practitioners or advocates whose contribution will strengthen the project.

11. Can two or more organisations submit an application?

Yes. One eligible organisation must be nominated as lead applicant and the others identified as partners. For an unregistered network or collective, the lead applicant must be an eligible registered member organisation.

The lead applicant will enter into the grant agreement with the Commonwealth Foundation and will hold the 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/partner can only be included in one application.

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

No. An organisation can only apply for one grant under the 2026–2027 open call.

14. Can an organisation that has previously 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 Foundation grant may apply only after that earlier grant has ended and the final payment has been received. Applicants currently implementing a grant, or awaiting final payment, are not eligible.

15. We plan to partner with an organisation whose average total income is £2.5 million or more. Does that affect eligibility?

No. The income requirement applies only to the applicant or lead applicant.

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 should grant partners monitor and report on their projects?

Successful applicants will be required to develop a monitoring plan for their project. The Foundation will provide guidance for grant partners, including through the use of simplified versions of the Results Based Management and Outcome Harvesting methodologies that we use for all our work.

For projects of one year duration, grant partners are required to provide an end of project report and a corresponding financial report. For projects of more than one year duration, grant partners are required to provide an annual report including a 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 arrears policy restricts eligibility for the open call to organisations from member countries that are in good financial standing with the Foundation. As in previous years, this excludes applications from several countries that are in serious arrears with respect to their contributions.

The list of eligible countries for the 2026–2027 open call can be found [here](#).

20. Can I apply for an open call grant to strengthen organisational capacity or support my organisation in other ways?

No. Open call grants are awarded for specific projects and do not cover core organisational costs.

The Foundation does appreciate the importance of strengthening organisational capacity. For Individual Organisation Grants, shortlisted applicants will be invited to propose capacity strengthening initiatives as part of their project budget, costing at up to 5% of the grant amount requested. These funds may be used to cover organisational needs that are broader than the project that enhance organisational effectiveness. For Collective Action grants, shortlisted applicants are welcome to suggest capacity strengthening initiatives that support collective action work. There is no need to include capacity-strengthening proposals in the first-stage application.

21. Can I look at examples of projects funded by open call grants in previous years?

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

While these provide an overview, applicants should note that requirements and focus areas differ from year to year. **Please also note that collective action grants are new for 2026-2027, so you will not find examples of projects funded under this grant stream.**

22. Can I request feedback on my application?

The Foundation receives a large number of applications each year and is therefore unable to provide individual feedback for unsuccessful applicants.

If you have not been contacted by the end of February 2027, it means your application has not been shortlisted.

THE APPLICATION PROCESS

1. How do I apply for a grant?

Log in and create your SurveyMonkey Apply account to complete and submit an online application. Only applications submitted through 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?

SurveyMonkey Apply is the provider of the online platform used for Commonwealth Foundation grant applications.

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

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, email 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 Commonwealth Foundation 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 is not monitored.** Please send any queries to **cfgrants@commonwealth.int**

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

Please email cfgrants@commonwealth.int and a staff member of the Foundation will assist you. We strongly advise applicants requiring help to reach out to us as soon as possible: last-minute requests for help may not be responded to in time, and you could risk missing the application deadline. **Applications cannot be submitted after the deadline.**

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

Please ensure that after you fill in the application form, you return to the main application screen and click on the submit button to submit your application. Filling in the application form does not automatically submit it.

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. the acknowledgement email is in your spam folder

Please check out all of these options, and if you are still experiencing problems, contact cfgrants@commonwealth.int

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

Shortlisted applicants will be contacted by the end of February 2027 and invited to provide further information, including a detailed project budget. If you have not been contacted by then, it means that your application has not been shortlisted.

Shortlisted applicants will be informed of the outcome by the end of June 2027. Grant agreements are expected to be concluded soon afterwards, allowing implementation to begin between August and September 2027.