CROSS-REGIONAL CONNECTIVITY GRANTS PROGRAM
2023-2025

GUIDELINES FOR APPLICANTS

1. OVERVIEW & OBJECTIVE

This program is intended to support Commonwealth member states in undertaking cross-regional peer-to-peer learning activities aimed at enhancing their knowledge, building their capacity, and growing their expertise to facilitate greater trade and investment.

With pandemic-related travel restrictions easing after two years, Commonwealth member states can again benefit from in-person engagement to explore and exchange learnings and best practices in various areas of development.

The program will support member states to deliver such activities, while enabling interventions and engagements that work toward achieving Commonwealth Connectivity Agenda (CCA) objectives of greater cross-Commonwealth connectivity, trade, and investment.

2. PARAMETERS

Commonwealth support to regional initiatives will be delivered through grant agreements. Individual grants are limited to £25,000 with funds primarily intended to cover transportation, accommodation, in-country logistics and event hosting. In-kind financial or other resource contributions of at least 25% of the requested amount are required to ensure effective program delivery, given Commonwealth grant limitations. This first call will support up to 4 cross-regional engagements.

All (100%) grant funding will be dedicated toward proposed project activities.

The program is open to bids from groups of public and private sector entities representing at least two regions of the Commonwealth. Grant recipients will ideally be regional secretariats/organisations with broad Commonwealth membership representation, and which are already institutionally aligned to receive grant funding.

Grant funding will be provided solely to the lead/application entity, though contact with potential partners and host organisations in receiving country/countries in advance is expected to ensure viability of proposals.

3. POTENTIAL PROGRAM ACTIVITIES

Project proposals must align with the objectives and initiatives of the Commonwealth Connectivity Agenda Action Plan (accessible here), focusing on one of the following Connectivity Clusters/work programs:

- Business to Business Connectivity
- Digital Connectivity
- Physical Connectivity
- Regulatory Connectivity
- Supply-Side Connectivity

Proposed projects should be designed around peer-to-peer learning exchanges between groups of public and/or private sector representatives from at least two regions of the Commonwealth. The regions of the Commonwealth are Asia; Africa; Caribbean and Americas; Europe and the Pacific.

4. APPLICATION PROCESS AND SELECTION CRITERIA

APPLICATION PROCESS

Calls for proposals will be open for up to two months and publicly advertised. Up to four applications will be chosen per call round. Applications will consist of:

1. A technical proposal
2. A financial breakdown
3. Additional supporting documents evidencing applicant experience, partner support, and high-level project endorsement

Each project will be expected to be completed within 12 months. Following completion of project activities, beneficiaries are expected to complete and submit an End of Project Report.

Templates for technical proposal, budget/financial breakdown and end of project report are available on the grant program page.

SELECTION CRITERIA

Proposals will be assessed over three stages.

STAGE 1: PRE-QUALIFICATION

1. Does the proposal cover two or more Commonwealth regions?
2. Does the proposal contain in-kind or financial contributions of at least 25% of the requested amount?

Each proposal will be graded on a Yes or No criteria. Both questions must be answered in the affirmative for a proposal to have passed this stage. Once a proposal is graded as having passed this stage, the proposal will then be appraised.

STAGE 2: APPRAISAL

Appraisal will be on the basis of five criteria:
1. Relevance
2. Impact & Effectiveness
3. Sustainability
4. Value for Money and
5. Inclusivity

Each element will be scored out of 5. The scoring process will take into account the small size of the grants and the constraints of recipient beneficiaries. The questions that will be assessed under each element include:

Relevance
1. Does the project fit within an approved policy, strategy or program of work adopted by the proponents?
2. Is that policy, strategy, or program of work endorsed at the highest relevant level (e.g., an agreed decision of the relevant committee of Ministers at the regional level)?
3. Is proof of advance contact and commitment to host evident in receiving country/countries at the highest relevant level?
4. Does the project fit neatly within the objectives in general and the specific initiatives in the Connectivity Action Plan?

Impact & Effectiveness
1. What difference will the intervention make to the beneficiaries?
2. Does the project serve as a possible model for similar interventions by other groups of Commonwealth members?
3. Why is the Commonwealth best placed to support this intervention?

Sustainability
1. Does the proposal foresee intended project impacts in the medium and long term?
2. How will the project outcomes be taken forward by the beneficiaries in the short term? For e.g. Is there reporting back to the Ministerial/political level responsible for the policy/strategy?
3. In the case of interventions involving the private sector, will private sector stakeholders be expected to explore future collaboration among themselves?

Value for Money
1. Are the activities cost-efficient?
2. Would an alternative approach deliver the same result for less cost?

Inclusion

Commonwealth Secretariat \ Marlborough House, Pall Mall, London SW1Y 5HX, UK
T +44 (0)20 7747 6500 \ F +44 (0)20 7930 0827

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1. How does the project address the participation of women or youth in its design and delivery?

STAGE 3: REGIONAL AND CLUSTER BALANCING

The entire package of proposals will be assessed to ensure that there is regional balance, as well as balance across the Connectivity Agenda's five Clusters/work programs. In this context, this means the collective group of approved proposals will strive for wide geographic coverage among proposals that fulfil the five criteria and touch on the work of as many of the CCA's five Clusters as possible.

5. HOW TO APPLY

Applications are to be submitted via the application form on the program webpage. The form cannot be saved and must be completed and submitted in a single session.

Applicants must also submit supporting documentation detailing the experience of the organisation/key staff to be involved in the project, as well supporting documentation to evidence agreement of project partners to participate in the proposed activities. Supporting documentation must be submitted via email to the Connectivity Agenda team at connectivity@commonwealth.int, detailing the application they are supporting. More details are available on the program application page.

Applicants may also wish to submit a concept note to provide further narrative around project proposals.

Questions can be submitted to the Connectivity Agenda team at: **connectivity@commonwealth.int**

6. FIRST CALL TIMELINE

ACTIVITY	DATE
PROPOSAL APPLICATION WINDOW	SEPTEMBER-OCTOBER 2023
ASSESSMENT OF PROPOSALS	OCTOBER-NOVEMBER 2023
COMMENCEMENT OF FIRST PROGRAMS	FROM NOVEMBER 2023