



Alumni Community Engagement Fund 2025-26

Activity and budget planning guidance notes

Organisers have until **31 March 2026** to deliver their activity. By end of 2025, your activity should either be approved for delivery or at least 70% complete.

Organisers can access information and resources to support their activity planning and will be assigned a dedicated member of the CSC Alumni Team who will provide guidance and support. You must attend one of two information sessions which will provide general information on this year's ACEF.

Commonwealth Alumni are expected to adhere to the [CSC Code of Conduct for Alumni](#). Any complaints received or issues in relation to the behaviour of ACEF organisers will be taken very seriously and any behaviour which does not adhere to the expectations and values expected of Commonwealth Alumni as outlined in CSC Code of Conduct for Alumni will be investigated. Engagement in ACEF and other Commonwealth Scholarship activities may be terminated at any time in relation to unsatisfactory conduct.

Essential criteria for your activity

- **Activity design:** includes clear and achievable outputs which meet the activity and ACEF objectives and is relevant to the identified community audience
- **Community audience:** the activity is relevant and appropriate for your target community audience.
- **Viability of the activity:** the activity is realistic to its objectives and can be implemented by the alumni organiser(s)
- **Value for money:** the activity is supported by a detailed and reasonable budget breakdown (original and converted GBP costs) which follows the funding guidance provided
- **Evidence of alumni expertise:** alumni will be involved in the activity development and delivery at all stages and will draw on their expertise and knowledge to support effective and impactful delivery
- **Risk assessment and management:** identified risks associated with the activity and how they will be managed are outlined in the application
- **Stakeholder engagement:** an outline on how to engage and manage activity stakeholders is provided to ensure effective and impactful delivery
- **Key outputs:** outline how the activity will have longer-term impact on attendees/participants/stakeholders, beyond the activity itself. You should consider how this will be evaluated when developing your activity.

Resources to support your activity delivery

The CSC has developed resources to help you plan and deliver your activity, as well as share important information with your ACEF contact.

The [Alumni Community Engagement Fund resources webpage](#) hosts the following activity documents. The password to access the page is **ACEF2025**

- ACEF Terms & Conditions
- Activity and budget planning guidance notes
- ACEF Organiser workplan and budget template (Excel spreadsheet)
- Activity Risk Assessment (available as an Excel spreadsheet or Word document)
- International Bank Transfer form (for payment to non-UK bank accounts)
- Pay claim form (for payments to UK bank accounts)

Planning your activity

You should use the **ACEF Organiser workplan and budget template** to plan your activity effectively. You should consider the following:

Venue

Venues can be expensive, and you may wish to investigate low cost or free venues. You should consider the appropriacy of the venue to meet the needs of your activity.

Sustainability

You must factor in sustainability in the products and services you use. You should use environmentally friendly items and avoid using single-use products such as plastic bottles, cutlery, and banners.

Virtual engagement

There are several platforms available to host online events. You should consider technology access, functionality and audience familiarity of these platforms when designing virtual activities.

Access and inclusion

Your activity should be accessible to anyone who wishes to take part or is invited. You should consider accessibility to any venues or use of any online platforms, as well as the set-up of any activities.

Safeguarding

The CSC is committed proactively to safeguard and promote the welfare of our beneficiaries, and to protect its staff, Commissioners, beneficiaries, and all those with whom the CSC comes into contact. Read the [CSC safeguarding policy](#) for more information.

As an ACEF organiser, you must proactively safeguard and promote the welfare of all those associated with your activity and seek advice and guidance from appropriate sources to ensure you meet all safeguarding requirements.

You should include a safeguarding statement as part of your activity information and display materials. An example of how to communicate this is shared below:

In developing this activity, the organiser(s) have sought to ensure the safety and welfare of all those participating.

The care and protection of children, young people, and adults involved in [activity name] is the responsibility of everyone who participates in the [event/activity]. If you are concerned that someone is at risk to others by participating in [event/activity], please seek advice from [organiser name]. If the child or adult are in immediate danger or require medical attention, please call the emergency services without delay. The event organiser and their contact details are: [details].

You must take into consideration local laws and other safeguarding requirements to deliver your activity. This includes legal principles such as [Free, Prior, and Informed Consent \(FPIC\)](#) which ensures Indigenous Peoples have the right to give or withhold consent to activities which may affect their lands, territories and resources.

Promote your activity

Ensure you factor in time to promote your activity as part of your planning and identify relevant and appropriate channels to reach your target audience.

Inviting external speakers and/or guests

If you wish to invite external speakers and/or guests, you should approach them early in the planning process, as their availability may impact the date/time of the activity. You should only invite external guests who have a particular interest or association with the theme of the activity to ensure they are able to contribute effectively.

Keep a record of participant numbers

Depending on the format of your event and any restrictions in place on participant numbers, you should ensure you monitor how many people are engaging in your activity. You will be asked to share this information as part of the final event report.

Photography and videography

Photos are an effective and easy way of showcasing activities and can be used for both in-person and virtual activities.

You must notify all participants if photos and/or videos will be taken and how they may be used, for example on a named social media channel, and the CSC website. An example of how to communicate this information is shared below:

Photographs will be taken at this event and the images may be used on [name] social media channels and the Commonwealth Scholarship Commission website: cscuk.fcdo.gov.uk. [Any other ways in which the images may be used, such as the association's media channels].

If you do not agree to your image being used, please notify the activity organiser [or other named person].

Important: The CSC **cannot** use images of children under the age of 18 years of age in any of its publications or online/social media channels due to data protection. We request that you **do not** share these images following your activity.

If your activity includes participants under the age of 18, you should consider taking photographs which do not include these individuals for the CSC's purposes of promoting your activity.

Welcome and introductions

It is important you say a few words to open the activity and provide some background on this and any aims/objectives, as well as to any introduce speakers etc. You should say a few words about the CSC-funded Alumni Community Engagement Fund and can use the text below:

The Commonwealth Scholarship Commission in the UK (CSC) offers opportunities for postgraduate study, research, and professional development to citizens across the Commonwealth.

The CSC's primary funder is the Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office (FCDO), which supports scholarships for individuals to gain the knowledge and skills required for sustainable development.

The CSC's Alumni Community Engagement Fund (ACEF) is an annual fund which seeks to support Commonwealth Alumni in raising awareness of key development issues at the community level through the organisation of an engagement activity.

Using the CSC logo

You **cannot** use the CSC logo in your activity materials and resources, such as banners and flyers. You may use the following text to acknowledge the funding:

This activity is funded and supported by the Commonwealth Scholarship Commission in the UK's 2025-26 Alumni Community Engagement Fund (ACEF). For more information, visit the [CSC website](https://cscuk.fcdo.gov.uk): cscuk.fcdo.gov.uk.

ACEF organiser workplan and budget template

You should use the **ACEF organiser workplan and budget template** to plan your activity effectively.

The template will help you outline your activity plans, manage tasks, and monitor costs associated with your activity. This document should be updated frequently and shared with your ACEF contact at alumni@cscuk.org.uk.

Workplan guidance (tab 1 of the spreadsheet)

The notes below refer the column headings in the 'Workplan' tab in the ACEF organiser workplan and budget template.

- **Action:** outline all the steps you need to complete to plan and deliver your activity. This should include small tasks, such as sending emails, to bigger tasks, such as gathering quotations for cost items.

- **Lead:** the name or initials of the organiser(s) responsible
- **Start date:** when the action should start. You may find as you plan out the actions needed to deliver your activity that you need to change the ordering and immediacy of some elements.
- **Completion date:** when the action should be completed by to ensure you can meet your final delivery date. Remember, you may need to build in slippage time for some actions and ensure you are setting realistic goals and expectations for delivery.
- **Notes:** keep your notes and ideas in one place to ensure you remember to follow-up on things. You may wish to record notes against the actions outlined, or keep a separate file.
- **Week XX:** calculate the number of weeks available to plan and deliver your activity. This will help you to set start and completion dates and keep realistic goals and expectations for delivery.
- **Month:** include the months your activity planning and delivery will take place over. This will help you to identify times where you may have other commitments and priorities and to adjust your start and completion dates appropriately.

Budget plan guidance (tab 2 of the spreadsheet)

All costs associated with your activity should be outlined in the 'Budget' tab of the ACEF organiser workplan and budget spreadsheet.

The notes below refer the column headings in the 'Budget' tab in the ACEF organiser workplan and budget template.

- **Cost item:** name of the item that requires payment, for example lunchtime catering
- **Description/purpose:** further details on the necessity of the cost item to support the event, or what the cost item entails. For example, for the cost item 'lunchtime catering', you may note buffet style refreshments, juice, and water.
- **Quantity:** quantity of the cost item required, where necessary
- **Unit cost:** unit cost of the item required, where necessary
- **Total cost & currency:** total cost of the cost item, based on quantity and unit cost. In the column heading, state the currency the amounts are calculated for
- **GBP cost:** conversion of costs to GBP to ensure costs are within the £1,200 budget. You may wish to state the conversion rate used somewhere on the tab.
- **Estimate cost (of actual not known):** in the early planning stages, you may wish to use this column to keep track of estimated costs whilst waiting for quotes
- **Invoice/quote reference:** include the name or reference number of the invoice/quotation or receipt which matches the cost item information. This will make it easier to submit your financial documents to support the fund payment.
Notes: keep your notes in one place to ensure you remember to follow-up on things. For example, if you are waiting for a quotation, you may want to make a note of when this was requested/is expected.
- **Relevant bank charges:** In some cases, banks may charge for international payments. You are advised to enquire with your bank if you will be charged for receiving international payments and include the cost you will be charged in your overall budget and payment request.

Full information on budgeting costs and financial processes is outlined in the **ACEF Terms & Conditions document**. You must read this document in full and take note of the additional financial processes outlined below.

Financial process

All costs and financial documentation (e.g. receipts, invoices, quotes) **must** be approved by your ACEF contact in advance of any agreements with vendors or payments made. Where receipts or invoices are not written in English, you must provide a translation of the items referenced. Without this documentation, you will not receive reimbursement.

You do not need to submit all payment claims in one go and can submit smaller claims as and when financial documents are approved.

Remember- it can take several weeks for funds to be received once processed. You should consider this when creating your activity delivery timeline and submitting your documentation. We ask that you submit payment requests at least 6 weeks in advance of payment deadlines and the delivery of your activity.

Claim forms

We acknowledge invoices and receipts in advance are not always available or common practice in all countries/regions.

Where financial documents cannot be gathered in advance of your activity, you must complete the relevant additional claim forms for approval and submit supporting evidence of the amount claimed, such as photographs of vendor prices, links to websites.

If you are unsure which form to use, please notify your ACEF contact.

- **Financial costs form:** to claim for costs where invoices or receipts cannot be gathered in advance. This should be supported by some form of alternative evidence of costs, such as website links or written confirmation from a vendor.
- **Voucher form:** to claim reimbursement for expenses incurred by participants to attend your ACEF activity (e.g. bus travel for each participant)
- **Speaker invoice form:** to claim for speaker(s) honorarium costs

Payment methods

You should submit your approved financial evidence alongside a payment claim form with the details of the bank funds should be paid to. We will **only** pay funds to ACEF organisers and not to vendors or others supporting the activity.

For payments made to a non-UK bank account, you should submit a completed International Bank Transfer form. For payments made to a UK account, you should submit a completed Pay claim form.

Please note, it can take several weeks for funds to be received once processed. You should consider this when submitting your documentation and ensure you submit this **at least 6 weeks in advance of payment deadlines and the delivery of your activity.**

In some cases, banks may charge for international payments. You are advised to enquire with your bank if you will be charged for receiving international payments and include the cost you will be charged in your overall budget and payment request.

Activity risk assessment

To ensure your activity meets the CSC's requirements for safeguarding, you must complete and submit an **Activity Risk Assessment** to your ACEF contact in advance of actioning any planning. Failure to submit this documentation will result in the CSC no longer supporting or funding your ACEF activity and you will be withdrawn from this opportunity.

How does the risk assessment work?

There are six steps to completing the risk assessment which are reflected in the columns in the risk assessment spreadsheet. A Word and Excel version of the risk assessment is available on the ACEF resources webpage.

The Activity Risk Assessment is already populated with common risk areas you may need to assess as part of your activity. For example, the safeguarding of attendees, provision of refreshments, venue transportation.

Where these risks are relevant to your activity, you should follow the process outlined below and update the information in the risk assessment to ensure it is relevant and appropriate to your activity. You should remove any irrelevant risks and control measures.

1. Identify your risks

What are the risks of running your activity? Areas to consider include:

- Risks to attendees/participants, such as child protection
- Venue and facilities, such as slips and trips, catering
- Welfare matters, such as exposure to infections and illness
- Reputational risks, such as poor behaviour, inappropriate discussion
- Engaging legitimate vendors and facilitators
- Obtaining consent for photography and/or videography
- Obtaining Free, Prior and Informed Consent (FPIC) if delivering an activity for Indigenous Peoples
- IT disruption or improper use of IT platforms while delivering a virtual activity

2. Analyse your risks by scoring the likelihood of them happening and the level of their potential impact on the activity and stakeholders, without any control measures in place to reduce/mitigate the risk.

- Rate the likelihood of the risk occurring between 1-5, where 1 is not very likely and 5 very likely
- Rate the impact that the risk would have on the activity between 1-5, where 1 is minimal impact and 5 major impact

These two scores are multiplied to give an initial risk score. Please note, it is highly unlikely that an initial risk score can equal '1'. If your initial risk score for any risks identified equals 1, please check and review the likelihood and impact scores assigned. For example, a fire at the venue may be very unlikely but its impact, without control measures in place, could be serious.

3. Assign a target score for the risk identified

- This should be the level of risk you are willing to undertake (your risk appetite)

4. Control measures

What measures will you put in place/ensure are in place to reduce and control the risk identified? For example:

- To minimise risk of participants slipping in a venue, you may ensure that walkways are kept clear, there is sufficient lighting, spillages are reported to venue staff immediately.

5. Rescore the likelihood and potential impact of the risk identified with the identified controls in place

How do the control measures reduce or minimise the potential impact of the risk identified?

- Rate the likelihood of the risk occurring following implementation of the control measures identified between 1-5, where 1 is not very likely and 5 very likely
- Rate the impact of the risk following implementation of the control measure identified between 1-5, where 1 is minimal impact and 5 major impact
- These two scores will be multiplied to give a residual risk score

6. Further actions required

If your residual risk score is higher than your target risk score, list additional actions you will take to reduce the risk further.

Reporting incidents

You must report any risk incidents in relation to your activity to your ACEF contact as soon as possible. Whilst you are responsible for the delivery of your activity, your ACEF contact should be informed if an incident occurs and how this was managed in relation to your risk assessment and any further measures that may have been taken.

Contingency planning

Organisers of in-person events should keep a contingency plan which outlines how their activity could be delivered by alternative means, such as virtual engagement, should circumstances change. Where funds have been spent to support in-person delivery, funds **may** be replaced but this **is not guaranteed** and will be assessed on a case-by-case basis.

We advise any change to delivery be communicated at least four-weeks in advance of the activity delivery, where possible.

Activity programme and speaker details

Alongside the ACEF organiser workplan and budget template and Activity Risk Assessment, organisers should submit an activity programme/itinerary outlining details of the activity, such as time and duration of different sessions, a brief summary of each session and the speakers or facilitators engaged.

You must also provide bios of any speakers and facilitators, outlining their expertise and relevance to your activity.

Activity report and feedback

At the end of the activity, you must submit an activity report and complete an online feedback survey. You will be provided with the report template to complete.

The activity report will be used to create an article on your ACEF activity for publication on the CSC website and other CSC social media channels. Where appropriate, you are asked to submit photographs of your activity as part of the report, and any quotations or comments from participants on the impact and engagement generated by your activity.

You will also be requested to complete a post-4 month feedback survey, designed to understand any ongoing impact or engagement as a result of your activity.