



Alumni Community Engagement Fund 2026-27

Terms and Conditions

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.

Small Changes for Big Impact

Small changes implemented at the community level can lead to a big impact over time. ACEF supports Commonwealth Alumni in delivering engaging activities designed to raise awareness and support individuals in implementing small changes at the community level with the aim of achieving long-term positive impact.

Each year, the CSC selects one or more themes which activities must address. Alumni are expected to draw on their knowledge and skills in areas related to one of the themes to develop and deliver a community engagement activity.

Alumni may apply as individuals, as a CSC Alumni Association, or as a group of Commonwealth Alumni not part of an existing association.

You can only apply for **one** theme.

Objectives

The objectives of ACEF are to:

- Promote and raise awareness of key development issues at the local community level through the organisation of an event or engagement activity, led by a Commonwealth Alumnus or group of Commonwealth Alumni.
- Support alumni in developing and delivering community and public engagement activities and showcase the importance of this engagement in the development context.
- Demonstrate the impact of Commonwealth Alumni as role models within their community and inspire others to seek opportunities for personal and/or professional growth.
- Engage and energise Commonwealth Alumni in connecting with communities to share their knowledge and/or skills.
- Broaden the reach of Commonwealth Alumni activities to communities and end users who are positively impacted by Commonwealth Scholarships.

2026-27 Activity themes

This year's themes are:

- **Artificial Intelligence for development**
- **Strengthening blue economies in SIDS**
- **Women entrepreneurs: catalyst for change**

You can find full details about these themes below:

Artificial intelligence for development

Open to: all engaged Commonwealth Alumni

The UK's Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office (FCDO) is integrating artificial intelligence (AI) in much of its development work, highlighting its potential to drive social good, inclusive growth, and democratic resilience, especially across Africa and Asia.

AI offers data-driven solutions to complex challenges. It has the potential to improve access to quality education and healthcare; advance scientific innovation; support climate action; enhance agricultural productivity; support small businesses; and strengthen public services. By enabling better decision-making and innovation, AI can help address social, economic, and environmental issues, especially in underserved communities, leading to more inclusive and sustainable development.

Activities under this theme should demonstrate how AI can address local development challenges.

Applicants should propose innovative, inclusive, and locally grounded activities that raise awareness and understanding of AI for development. Suggested approaches include:

- Engaging young people through workshops, AI clubs, and intergenerational learning opportunities.
- Delivering sessions on responsible AI (for example data privacy, bias, fairness), with examples such as medical diagnosis, educational learning tools, or agriculture advisory apps
- Using local media and creative arts to promote AI awareness, such as community radio, street plays, storytelling, and local print or digital media. Activities could include radio programmes discussing AI in healthcare access, street plays on ethical AI use in schools, or storytelling to explore AI applications in health, education, and farming.
- Partnering with NGOs, schools, farmer groups, and local authorities to deliver campaigns, AI-pilot projects, and digital skills training.
- Providing community exposure to AI tools relevant to local needs, such as health symptom checkers, AI learning assistants in education, pest-prediction apps to improve crop yield.
- Creating forums for community feedback to contribute policymaking and AI development, such as gathering input on how farmers, students, or patients use AI tools.

Strengthening blue economies in SIDS

Open to: all engaged Commonwealth Alumni living or working in [SIDS](#)

Nearly half of all Commonwealth members are Small Island Developing States (SIDS). While highly vulnerable to effects of a changing climate, SIDS face a unique set of challenges in balancing environmental protection and extreme weather mitigation alongside the demands of economic growth.

The FCDO's [Small Island Developing States \(SIDS\) strategy 2026-2030](#) published earlier this year outlined three priority areas of support: Partner, Reform, and Grow. The pillars focus on strengthening climate resilience, advancing sustainable blue economies, amplifying local voices, and improving governance. The strategy aims to reduce environmental and economic vulnerabilities while promoting inclusive, long-term growth.

Activity proposals under this theme should recognise the heightened vulnerability of SIDS to climate and nature crises, with a strong focus on strengthening sustainable blue economies as a pathway to resilience. This includes promoting ocean-based livelihoods, protecting marine biodiversity, amplifying local voices, and strengthening inclusive governance, while supporting climate risk mitigation and enabling sustainable, long-term growth.

Activities under this theme should reflect the unique challenges faced by SIDS, with a strong focus on sustainable blue economies as a pathway to resilience.

Proposed activities could include:

- Community-led workshops on sustainable fishing, marine conservation, and coastal restoration.
- Local awareness campaigns on climate risks, ocean protection, and blue economy opportunities.
- Youth and intergenerational initiatives sharing traditional knowledge on resilience and environmental stewardship.
- Capacity-building sessions for local leaders to strengthen inclusive governance and community decision-making.
- Showcase or innovation fairs to promote sustainable tourism, local blue economy enterprises, and business models.
- School and community education workshops on biodiversity protection and climate resilience.
- Partnership events with local organisations to support livelihood diversification and small-scale ocean-based enterprises.

Women entrepreneurs: catalyst for change

Open to: all engaged Commonwealth Alumni

The [UN Women's economic empowerment strategy](#) promotes equal access to opportunities, resources, and rights, enabling women to achieve financial independence and contribute to sustainable development.

Women entrepreneurs are powerful drivers of economic growth and social change, creating jobs, fostering innovation, and strengthening community resilience. However, many face persistent barriers, including limited access to skills development, capacity-building, and finance, which restrict their ability to start and grow businesses.

With targeted support to build digital, financial, and leadership skills, women can not only grow sustainable enterprises but also drive meaningful social impact, boosting local economies, advancing inclusion, and promoting sustainability.

Unlocking this potential requires strong national policies and programmes that support access to finance, tailored capacity-building, and gender-responsive business environments to help women entrepreneurs thrive and scale their impact.

Activities should focus on increasing skills, improving access to information and opportunities, and strengthening enabling environments for sustainable business growth. Proposal should not include the direct provision of grants or funding to women entrepreneurs.

Proposed activities could include:

- Skills and capacity-building workshops for women entrepreneurs on digital, financial, and leadership skills to strengthen business growth and impact.
- Showcase fairs connecting women to funding opportunities, microfinance, and investment readiness programmes.
- Policy awareness sessions to increase understanding of national schemes and programmes, financial support initiatives, and gender-responsive policies.
- Community outreach or media awareness campaigns to promote women's entrepreneurship and highlight available support.
- Storytelling events and local media campaigns to showcase successful women entrepreneurs and inspire participation.

Guidance for applicants and organisers

Before submitting your application, please read through this guidance document which provides information on the ACEF timeline, the types of activities you could deliver, funding guidance, and roles and responsibilities of successful applicants. If you have any questions about this information, please email alumni@cscuk.org.uk.

Successful applicants (organisers) should refer to this document and other resources for guidance on how to manage and deliver your ACEF activity.

Activity delivery

Successful applicants will have until **31 March 2027** to deliver their activity. By end of 2026, your activity should either be delivered, approved for delivery or at least 70% complete.

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

Applicants will be asked to provide a top-level risk assessment as part of their application. Please see the section on 'Activity Risk Assessment' in this document for further information.

Choosing your community

When applying for ACEF, it is important to clearly define the community you intend to engage. For the purpose of ACEF, a 'community' refers to a network of people linked by shared characteristics, such as location, identity, interest, need, or lived experiences, who can be meaningfully engaged and inspired to respond to your message.

When defining your 'community', you should:

- Be specific – clearly identify who you will engage
- Demonstrate relevance to the selected ACEF theme
- Explain why this group matters in driving 'small changes for big impact'
- Show the benefits of the activity for the community, particularly in terms of awareness and behaviour change

Examples of communities (not exhaustive) include: professional groups, youth groups, rural farming communities, public school students, local fisherfolk associations, tourism-dependant

local businesses, women-led small and medium enterprises, residents of remote or underserved areas, and women in informal trading sectors.

Designing your engagement activities

The following examples illustrate the types of activities you could deliver under ACEF. This list is not exhaustive and is intended to support your thinking and ideas as you develop your proposal.

- Skills based training activities, such as masterclasses and workshops
- Lectures, seminars, or workshops (virtual or in person) that raise awareness of key issues
- Civic engagement projects which develop and promote solutions to key challenges, for example developing a campaign to spread awareness about national policies on youth development
- Civic engagement initiatives that develop and promote solutions to community challenges (e.g. awareness campaigns linked to national policies on youth development)
- Discussion forums or debates that encourage dialogue and knowledge exchange
- Ideathons or collaborative problem-solving events

You can deliver virtual and/or in-person activities, depending on your context and target community.

You are also encouraged to review previously delivered activities on the [CSC website](#) for inspiration on activity design and the communities you may consider engaging.

Please note that applications seeking funding to support existing or ongoing work, projects, or activities will **not** be considered.

Essential criteria for your activity

In your application, you should address the following criteria:

- **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, with objectives that are achievable within the proposed timeframe and deliverables 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 potential 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

Roles and responsibilities

The primary role of the alumni organiser, or lead organiser (where applying on behalf of a CSC Alumni Association or group), is to plan and develop the proposed activity and coordinate with fellow organisers and key stakeholders to ensure its successful and impactful delivery.

You will be responsible for organising the activity, including assigning roles amongst fellow alumni organisers, liaising with key stakeholders and the CSC Alumni Team to share activity details, updates on progress, and activity reports and evaluation.

If you are not based in the country in which your activity will be delivered, you must outline how you will plan, coordinate, and manage effective delivery of the activity, including any in-country support or partnerships that will enable successful implementation.

Main responsibilities

1. Act as the primary contact for the development and delivery of the activity. You will:

- Attend all requested meetings and submit all required documentation to the Alumni Team within agreed timeframes
- Provide regular updates on progress and development of the activity to the Alumni Team
- Establish any required contacts within your chosen community to engage your audience and seek support in the organisation of your activity

2. Develop and deliver the activity, working with others where required. You will:

- Draw on your and other's expertise to develop your activity and submit updated plans and information as required/requested by the Alumni Team
- Ensure your plans and activity address the activity theme and ACEF objectives
- Consider your audience when developing the content to ensure information is delivered at the appropriate level and is engaging
- Identify and engage any required speakers and external stakeholders, manage their involvement and outline their role in your activity documents as required
- Complete all due diligence and safeguarding requirements with those involved in your activity, such as organisations, vendors and stakeholders
- Identify and liaise with appropriate vendors to arrange event details
- Complete and submit the following documents to the Alumni Team:
 - Organiser workplan and budget spreadsheet
 - Activity Risk Assessment
 - Activity programme/itinerary
 - Speaker/vendor/volunteer bios (where relevant)
- Submit all financial documentation, such as quotes, invoices, and remittances, in a timely manner, following the processes outlined

3. Provide a post-activity report and feedback. You will:

- Submit a post-activity report which will be used to create an article or story for publication on the CSC website. This includes any photographs or assets from your activity which can be used as part of this publication.
- Complete the ACEF final feedback survey

Your ACEF contact

All successful applicants will be supported by a member Alumni Team. Your ACEF contact will:

- Hold an initial meeting with you to understand more about your activity, planning and delivery proposal, and offer any early guidance.
- Schedule at least 1-2 additional meetings throughout the delivery period to check-in on your progress and share guidance. You may also request meetings if you need support from your ACEF contact and should outline what you wish to discuss in advance.
- Communicate with you monthly to check-in on your progress and highlight any ACEF resources to support your activity delivery.
- Check and approve your Activity Risk Assessment, workplan, budget overview, and financial documentation.
- Attend, where possible and appropriate, your ACEF activity.
- Receive your activity report post-delivery and produce an article or story for publication on the CSC website, in consultation with you.

Your ACEF contact will not manage any aspects of your activity development or delivery or liaise with vendors and other stakeholders on your behalf.

Note: due to holidays in the UK, the Alumni Team will only be able to provide limited support for your activity in December.

General conditions

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.

If you wish to withdraw from ACEF, you must notify your ACEF contact immediately and in advance of any payments being made. Where you are acting as a lead organiser alongside fellow alumni organisers, you must inform your ACEF contact who will be taking on this lead role instead.

The CSC reserves the right to withdraw funding from any ACEF organisers where they are in breach of the Terms & Conditions outlined in this document and in any other communications and guidance provided by the Alumni Team.

Activities developed cannot be part of an existing activity or project. Support for your activity will be withdrawn if this is the case.

Funding guidance

The maximum funding amount per activity is **£1,200** equivalent. For organisers delivering activities in SIDS, the maximum funding amount per activity is **£1,400** equivalent.

Please refer to the lists below on what can and cannot be funded. If you are unsure as to what constitutes reasonable costs, you should contact the CSC Alumni Team.

Funded items:

- Reasonable travel expenses necessary to deliver the activity. This may include travel expenses to visit and follow-up with activity participants, but organisers should consider the cost vs value of these visits and expenses.
- Reasonable speaker expenses, preferably local speakers
- Reasonable expenses for volunteers supporting the activity to covers travel and meal costs
- Meals and refreshments that are a required as part of the activity
- Reasonable costs of materials and communications to publicise the activity. Please ensure where possible you use free mediums of publicity.

Not funded items:

- Research projects
- Excessive budgets that cannot be justified against the objectives, outputs, and country context, including budgets where a large and disproportionate sum of money will be spent on catering, refreshments, or entertainment.
- Existing activities delivered by the CSC Secretariat, British Council, or CSC Alumni Associations, where activities and/or funding has already been approved.
- Payment of staff salaries, office space, or overheads
- Funding or financial assistance for participants to support their individual ventures, enterprises, or income-generating activities
- Activities that support a political campaign
- Activities that deliver direct services, for example vaccinations, health checks
- Creation of new websites or databases
- Phone calls or internet costs associated with the organisation of the activity. Where these costs may be critical to the delivery of your activity and will result in an additional cost to any standard airtime/internet plans you may have, you should liaise with your ACEF contact.
- Payments towards the ACEF organiser(s) for their time/contributions
- Miscellaneous costs. All costs must be transparent and itemised.

Applicants must provide a breakdown of initial identified costs to deliver their proposed activity in their application form. Where costs are estimates, you can indicate this.

Budgeting for organisers

Organisers have until **31 March 2027** to deliver their activity following their attendance of an online ACEF information session. By 31 December 2026, your activity should either be approved for delivery or at least 70% complete. If the CSC is not satisfied with the progress of the activity, the fund may be withdrawn.

All financial documentation must be submitted to the Alumni Team by **1 March 2027**. You **must** notify the team if your activity will not be delivered or if you will not use the funding by this deadline.

Payment information **not** submitted by 1 March 2027 without notice will **not be reimbursed** and **support will be withdrawn** from the planned activity.

All final costs associated with your activity should be outlined in the 'Budget' tab of the **ACEF organiser workplan and budget spreadsheet**. Miscellaneous costs will not be funded. All cost items must be individually outlined in the 'Budget' tab.

All costs and financial documentation (e.g. receipts, invoices, quotes) **must** be approved by the Alumni Team in advance of any agreements 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.

Where financial documentation cannot be gathered in advance of the activity, you must discuss alternative options with the Alumni Team, who can provide financial claim templates where needed.

Evidence of goods paid

You **must** submit evidence of receipt of goods funded by ACEF. This can be in the form of formal financial evidence such as delivery notes, receipts of payments made, and photographs of the items.

Additional costs

Any additional cost(s) incurred during the activity which were not approved in advance should be reported immediately along with evidence of these. Additional or unexpected costs could include extending venue hire due to unexpected circumstances or activities over-running, for example.

Remittance guidance

You are expected to confirm when you have received the funding for the costs claimed. In some cases, you may receive funding higher than the amount requested and approved. This could be due to exchange rates at the time of payments being made. You may also need to unexpectedly reduce the number of attendees at your activity, which could result in reduced catering and/or venue requirements.

If you receive a payment higher than the total required to deliver your activity, or you no longer require the full funding amount you have received, you must inform your ACEF contact and propose alternative ways in which this funding can be used to support your activity.

If you receive lower funding due to exchange rates at the time of payments being made, please also inform your ACEF contact.

Contingency

Should you need to change your activity due to unexpected circumstances, you must notify the Alumni Team immediately. 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 to be communicated at least four-weeks in advance of the activity delivery, where possible.

Payment methods

- Activity costs will be paid to the organiser on receipt of all necessary documentation. Payments will be made via **International Bank Transfer**.
- Please note, 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**.
- 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.

- For payment requests to a UK bank account, you should notify the Alumni Team for further guidance.

Activity risk assessment

As part of your application, you must identify key risks associated with your activity and how these will be managed. You can view an example of the application form risk assessment below.

Example risk assessment in the application form

Key risks	Likelihood Low Medium High	Impact Low Medium High	Control measure(s) List the control measures you will put in place to reduce and control the risk identified	Further actions What will you do if the control measures identified do not reduce the risk sufficiently?
Low uptake from community to attend the activity	L	H	- Early activity promotion amongst key audience - Review sign-up at XX and XX intervals	- Review scale of the activity (e.g. smaller group for activity)
COVID-19 lockdown enforced preventing in-person workshop to go ahead	M	H	- ACEF contact and any fellow organisers are informed immediately, and government guidance shared - Contingency plan kept up to date alongside general activity planning - Those signing up are informed how the workshop will be delivered if a lockdown comes into place	- ACEF contact informed, and a meeting held to discuss further action

Organisers will be expected to complete a detailed risk assessment as part of their activity delivery and will receive guidance on how to complete this.

When completing your risk assessment, you must take into consideration local laws and other 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.

What happens at the end of the activity?

At the end of your activity, you must submit an activity report and complete an online feedback survey. The activity report will be used to create an article or story 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.

Guidance on photographs and videos

Please note that the CSC cannot publish photographs of participants under the age of 18. Where your activity involves participants under 18, you should carefully consider the type of photographs taken to ensure that they are not identifiable or captured.

When completing your risk assessment, you must also consider any potential risks associated with photography and videography, including safeguarding, consent, and data protection.

Feedback surveys

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

Timeline

The timeline outlines key dates and deadlines for ACEF 2026-27. Individual delivery timelines should be developed with your ACEF contact for your activity.

Date start	Action
July	Applications open and close
End of August	Applicants informed of outcomes
w/c 31 August	Online information sessions for successful organisers
1 March	Payment information deadline
31 March	All activities complete
13 April	Post-event report and ACEF feedback survey completed
August	Post-4 month feedback survey