



The Commonwealth Conversation

HOSTED BY THE ROYAL COMMONWEALTH SOCIETY

HOST A COMMONWEALTH CONSULTATION

The Royal Commonwealth Society (RCS) would like to engage as many people as possible around the world in the Commonwealth Conversation. One important way that you can help us to do this is to facilitate a 'Commonwealth Consultation' among your own organisation and networks. The RCS will be able to provide a limited amount of financial support to help your organisation do this.

What you discuss in your consultations will then be fed into the wider Conversation and eventually into recommendations that we will present to all Commonwealth Heads of Government at their meeting in Trinidad & Tobago in November 2009. By facilitating a Commonwealth Consultation, you will be helping to make your community's voice heard in the Conversation – this is your chance to help shape your Commonwealth in the 21st century.

1. WHY DO WE NEED A COMMONWEALTH CONVERSATION?

Sixty years ago, as the modern Commonwealth was born, brave decisions were taken by its founding fathers to raise a free and equal association of states committed to democracy, development and diversity from the ashes of Empire. Since its remarkable beginnings, the Commonwealth has achieved much of which it can be rightfully proud. Yet, in an increasingly crowded marketplace of international associations, the Commonwealth must reevaluate how it can live up to the lofty ambitions of its earliest beginnings.

In 2009, both the Commonwealth's 60th anniversary year and its Heads of Government Meeting (CHOGM), offer the perfect opportunity for the Commonwealth to revisit how it can continue adding value to the international community in the 21st century.

Encompassing two billion people the world over, the Commonwealth's true potential lies in its continued relevance to its citizens. With this in mind, the RCS, the oldest and largest civil society organisation devoted to the Commonwealth, is facilitating a global public consultation on the future of the association. This is the Commonwealth Conversation.

2. WHAT IS A COMMONWEALTH CONSULTATION?

An open discussion, organised by your organisation, about the future of the Commonwealth among members of your network and other invited guests.

3. WHO CAN TAKE PART IN A COMMONWEALTH CONSULTATION?

The size, format and timing of each Commonwealth Consultation is very flexible, and depends on the capabilities of your organisation and the scope of your network. A meeting of participants who know nothing about the Commonwealth will produce just as interesting results as a meeting of participants who are very knowledgeable

about it. Likewise, the size of your consultation does not matter. As the organiser of a Commonwealth Consultation, you decide who to invite from your own extended networks.

4. WHAT IS YOUR ROLE AS ORGANISER?

- To identify 2-3 key speakers who will be able to kick off the discussion in your Consultation. Examples could include government officials, diplomats, academics, activists, local business people and current/former staff of Commonwealth organisations. The RCS will be happy to provide guidance and advice about possible speakers if needed.
- To invite members of your networks to come to the Consultation, and to work with local partners to expand the invitation list.
- To arrange the logistics of the Consultation e.g. venue
- To use the discussion guide provided (this will be available on the Commonwealth Conversation website shortly) to help facilitate the Consultation.
- To tape, digitally record, or write up notes from the Consultation and send them to the RCS, with basic information about the people who took part (e.g. number, approximate age range, nationalities, occupations)

5. FINANCIAL SUPPORT

To help facilitate your Commonwealth Consultation, the RCS will be able to provide a limited amount of financial support. If you do require assistance with the costs of venue hire, local transport for speakers, light refreshments etc, you may submit a request for funding. Please send a brief email outlining what you propose to do and what costs you need covered by **11 September 2009** to Zoë Ware at zoe.ware@thercs.org or alternatively call +44 (0)20 7766 9240. To ensure that we will be able to help, the sooner you make your request the better!

6. HOW MUCH DO I NEED TO KNOW ABOUT THE COMMONWEALTH?

There is no requirement for you as an organiser to become an expert in the Commonwealth overnight! You may know a lot about the Commonwealth as a member of a Commonwealth association, group or network, or you may know very little about it at all. We want as many people to get involved as possible – no matter how much you know, or even like, about the association.

That said, as an organiser, it is important that you have a basic understanding about Commonwealth and the aims of the Commonwealth Conversation project. The Conversation website is a good starting point for you to find out more. See here for more information: www.thecommonwealthconversation.org.

7. SENDING THE INFORMATION TO THE RCS

You can let us know the results of your Consultation in a number of ways:

- If you have a video or audio recording of your discussion, you can email it through to Zoë Ware at zoe.ware@thercs.org (if it is small enough)
- You can also post your reports and recordings to Zoë Ware at the Royal Commonwealth Society, 25 Northumberland Avenue, London, WC2N 5AP. If possible, please make sure they are in digital format on a CD ROM.
- If you do not have a recording, please write up a report of your Consultation, highlighting the key discussion points and findings. You can email this through to Zoë Ware at zoe.ware@thercs.org.

8. HOW WILL THE RESULTS BE USED?

The results of your Commonwealth Consultation will be used in the following ways:

- Ideas from your meeting will be used in the drafting of the recommendations from the Commonwealth Conversation to Heads of Commonwealth Governments at CHOGM.
- Extracts from your discussion may be uploaded onto the Commonwealth Conversation website, for others to comment on.
- Examples from your discussions may be used as case studies in the final report of the Commonwealth Conversation which will be completed in January 2010.

9. TIMEFRAME

The Commonwealth Conversation will be running from 20 July 2009 until the Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting (CHOGM) in Trinidad & Tobago at the end of November 2009. In order to make sure that the results of your Commonwealth Consultation are fed into the recommendations that we take to CHOGM, please make sure that you send us the results of your discussions by **FRIDAY 30 OCTOBER 2009**.

10. FURTHER QUESTIONS

If you have any further questions about organising a Commonwealth Consultation, or you would like to discuss the Commonwealth Conversation project in more detail, please contact Zoë Ware on +44 (0)20 7766 9240 or zoe.ware@thercs.org.

THANK YOU VERY MUCH FOR YOUR INTEREST IN THE COMMONWEALTH CONVERSATION.

WE LOOK FORWARD TO HEARING WHAT YOU AND YOUR GROUP HAVE TO SAY!

WWW.THECOMMONWEALTHCONVERSATION.ORG