

Evaluation of the Commonwealth Secretariat's Consensus Building Programme

TERMS OF REFERENCE

1. INTRODUCTION

The Commonwealth is a voluntary association of independent and equal sovereign states. Its special strength lies in the combination of its diversity and shared inheritance. Its members are bound together by respect for all states and peoples; by shared values and principles; and by concern for the vulnerable. The Commonwealth Secretariat in London is the backbone of the Commonwealth. It convenes summits and high-level meetings; executes mandates set by the Commonwealth Heads of Government (CHOGM) and implements strategic plans agreed by its Board of Governors representing its member states.

The Commonwealth's Secretariats power to convene member states is manifested in its high-level meetings, from CHOGM to ministerial meetings. It is considered to be a core strength of the Commonwealth in its delivery of value to member states¹. Commonwealth positions that emerge from these meetings are represented in global discussions including in the development of the SDGs, the Paris Agreement on Climate Change, G20 meetings and annual general meetings of the World Health Organisations. In recent years, the Commonwealth convening and visibility actions has helped focus attention on the issues facing small states and has advanced practical solutions to address national problems in education, health, trade, gender equality, human rights and sports for development.

In the Strategic Plan, 2017/18 - 2020/21, *consensus building* was identified as an enabling strategic outcome undergirding the five programmatic pillars. The consensus building programme comprise nine projects, each supporting one or more programmatic outcomes². Consensus building meetings and supportive processes convene high-level officials, ministers and heads of states to discuss, share knowledge and propose responses to common issues impacting the Commonwealth broadly and/or sub-groups of member states more specifically. Meeting outcomes are agreed upon by member countries for further action. These outcomes are delivered through commitments and actions by member states, the Commonwealth Secretariat and other partners in knowledge sharing, networking and strengthened alliances, thought leadership, advocacy, and policy changes at the global and national levels.

In March 2020, the Secretariat commenced the process to develop a new strategic plan. The Annual Evaluation Plan identified a number of critical evaluations to inform the new Strategic Plan development, including the evaluation of the Consensus Building Programme. The outcome of this evaluation is also expected to inform the development of a Global Advocacy Strategy for the Secretariat.

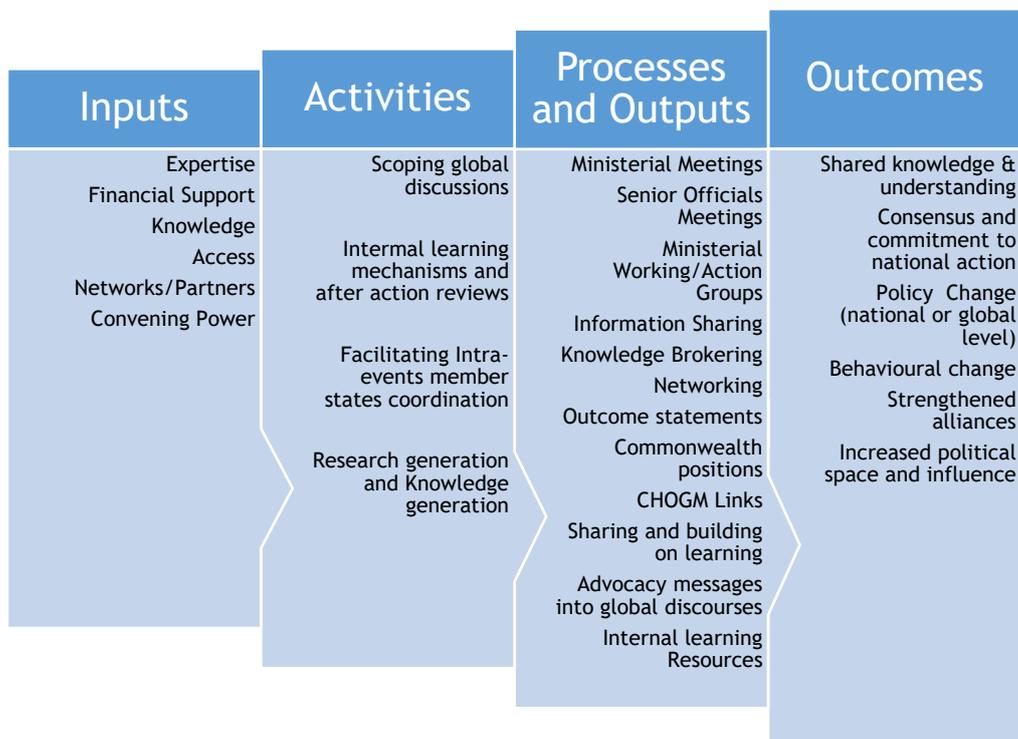
¹ Mid Term Evaluation of the 2017/18 – 2020/21 Strategic Plan, October 2019

² See List in Annex 1.

2. PROGRAMME DESIGN AND DELIVERY

The mapping below outlines a generic programme logic for Secretariat’s consensus building programme, i.e. how the projects and actions are expected to realise the outcomes targeted. It proposes a theory-based framework that can be further validated and refined through the evaluation process.

Consensus Building Programme Logic



Overview of Operational and Management Structures

The Consensus Building projects are developed and implemented by various divisional teams across each of the three Directorates in the Secretariat. Each project is anchored by at least one major and a number of supportive processes and events that occur at various periodicities, depending on the project. Each ministerial meeting differs in its design, composition, duration and cycle.

Consensus building projects extend beyond meetings at the levels of Heads and Ministers and also support senior officials’ working spaces i.e. Commonwealth Accelerated Development Mechanism for Education, Commonwealth Action Committee on Health, Commonwealth Advisory Body on Sport. These supportive mechanisms focus on the framing, monitoring or implementation of the outcomes agreed at the leadership level. Some projects also facilitate smaller working groups of ministers i.e. Education Ministers Action Groups, Commonwealth Youth Ministerial Taskforce.

The Events and Protocol team supports the operational management of the events. Other corporate functions and programmes, including Partnerships, Gender, and Communications may also play a supporting role.

Each consensus building project is linked with a technical project delivered by the same team.

See Annex 1: Table of CB Projects

3. PURPOSE AND USERS OF THE EVALUATION

The main purpose of the evaluation is to assess the Commonwealth Secretariat's performance in utilising its convening power, global presence, visibility and influence, in particular through its ministerial and high-level meetings, to deliver benefits to, and promote the interests and voice of, its member states. The evaluation is formative and is expected to inform discussions and planning on the organisation's advocacy strategy in the context of a new strategic plan from July 2021.

The objectives of this evaluation are to:

- Clarify the mandate and evolution of purpose of the Commonwealth's utilisation of its convening power in the CB meetings
- Inform key stakeholders on the relevance and effectiveness of convening and consensus building actions;
- Foster learning on the appropriate role and scope for convening and how to effectively select appropriate focus areas for consensus building and manage convening activities;
- Provide evidence-based lessons on *where* the CB approach worked well in generating desired outcome and where it has not;
- Assess current and potential linkages between ministerial meetings in addressing key thematic issues promoted by the Secretariat;
- Assess linkages between ministerial meetings and the bi-annual Heads of Government meetings in addressing key issues;
- Comparatively assess the Secretariat's consensus building approach with other intergovernmental and regional organisations, highlighting opportunities and lessons for strengthening organisation's advocacy role.
- Inform the development of a Global Advocacy strategy and operational guidelines for the new Strategic Planning Period (2021 - 2025).

Primary Users

There are two primary user groups of the evaluation: 1) senior management and programme leads of the Commonwealth Secretariat; 2) the Board of Governors, sector leader and heads of member states.

4. EVALUATION SCOPE AND KEY QUESTIONS

The evaluation scope will cover the two strategic periods between 2013/14 to 2020/21, a total of 8 years. This will allow for the assessment of changes within the context of various organisational and strategic restructures. The assessment will include CHOGMs, ministerial and high-level senior meetings as well as other supportive mechanisms such as working groups. A comprehensive listing of meeting convened during the period is in Annex 2.

Key Evaluation Questions

The evaluation purpose and objectives, and the assessment of the Secretariat's performance, will be framed in line with the 2019 updated OECD/DAC Evaluation criteria³. The following proposed questions will be validated and refined by the Evaluators in consultation with internal stakeholders.

Effectiveness: How effectively has the Commonwealth Secretariat utilised its convening power to the benefits of Commonwealth member states?

1. Do the CB meetings serve the purpose for which they have been established?
2. To what extent is the Secretariat's convening power enabling the realisation of its strategic and programmatic outcomes? What unintended outcomes may have emerged, where and why?
3. Where, why and how does the Secretariat's influence in global discussions work? On which global issue(s) has the Commonwealth demonstrated effective leadership? Is the Secretariat deploying its convening powers in the 'right' issues?
4. How well does the Secretariat use its convening power to leverage members themselves, third parties, regional and global actors in driving change for its members?
5. How has/ can the Commonwealth use its global position and convening power to deliver to SDG 17?
6. How has the Secretariat's consensus building added value to positioning and linking the Commonwealth to other inter-governmental organisations at regional and international levels (for example, the AU, OIF, SADC, CARICOM, PIFS, OECS, and the UN commissions/platforms - UNFCCC, UNCSW, UNGA, UNHRC
7. To what extent has gender been mainstreamed in the CB approach and projects?

Efficiency: How well is the Secretariat utilising and managing its resources?

8. How efficiently are resources (financial, non-financial, tangible and intangible) used/ managed?
9. What measures were in place to enhance programme efficiency in the use of resources and implementation of activities?
10. How well have the delivery and operational management mechanism/processes worked?
11. How are outcome statements and actions monitored and reported? How is MEL information shared from one meeting to another?
12. How does the Secretariat facilitate learning from consensus building actions? How are these documented and actioned?

Relevance: How well do the CB projects objectives and design respond to member states' needs, policies, and priorities, and would continue to do so as the global context changes

13. Who sets the mandates for these meetings and how have these mandates evolved? Are these mandates still relevant?
14. To what extent does the Secretariat's convening power respond to the needs of member states?
15. Is the Commonwealth involved where it should be, and to the level it should be to be effective from a strategic perspective?

³ <https://www.oecd.org/dac/evaluation/daccriteriaforevaluatingdevelopmentassistance.htm>



16. How responsive has the convening agenda been to the evolving needs of MS and the global context?
17. Are there opportunities, gaps where the Commonwealth should be more deeply involved (where there is demand and we have the expertise) and it is not?

Coherence/Alignment: How well do CB projects fit within the overarching programmes and with the actions of other institutions functioning within the same context.

18. To what extent should these meetings be aligned to the CHOGM agenda? Are there efficient and relevant mechanisms in place for this to happen? How well do MM feed the CHOGM agenda or vis-a-versa? What lessons can be drawn from practices?
19. How well are the convening actions aligned with other projects delivering to the same programmatic outcomes within the Secretariat's portfolio?
20. How aligned are the CW meetings with global meetings? How aligned are the CW advocacy issues to the global agenda? What entry points exist in global discussions for addressing issues relevant to the Commonwealth and to raise the voice and visibility in particular of small states, how effective have these entry points been recognised and utilised?
21. How consistent is the CW in addressing and following up on key issues? What follow-up mechanisms exist for key issues that the Secretariat is advocating for? How are conversations around these issues developed and sustained from one meeting to another?

Impact: To what extent has the CB programme delivered to longer-term/high level social, environmental, governance and economic changes (positive or negative, intended or unintended)

22. What long-term benefits has Secretariat's use of its convening powers reaped for Member States, the Secretariat and Commonwealth Organisations?
23. How have hosting countries benefitted/ been impacted by their experience.

Sustainability

24. How likely is the identified benefits to persist over time?
25. What are the key enablers and risks to sustained benefits?

Lessons

26. What are the factors, drivers, opportunities, capacities and processes that foster effective convening and collective action?
27. How does the Secretariat facilitate learning from consensus building actions?
28. How are these documented and actioned?

5. METHODOLOGY

The evaluation will utilise the OECD/DAC evaluation criteria and the Evaluators will devise an appropriate analytical tool to inform the assessment of the underlying evaluation questions and deliver to the evaluation objectives. The approach will be largely qualitative and is therefore expected to apply a number of such methodologies to ensure a robust triangulation of findings.

The following methodologies may be applicable.

Case study: The case study methodology allows for a deep-dive analysis of select issues or stories of change. Case studies can address select global issues analysis (debt management, international finance, human rights and gender) in depth to assess the Secretariat's influence and use of its convening to channel that influence to targeted outcomes. A small number of case studies (2-4) should be developed and can incorporate targeted key informant interviews, observations, a larger number of interviews with a wide range of external stakeholders, and in-depth analysis of relevant web, bibliometric, media, and social media data.

Direct observation as convenient to the evaluation timeline and based on the scheduling a meetings in the financial year 2020/21

Possibilities in the time frame of the evaluations⁴:

1. Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting (CHOGM), Kigali,
2. Commonwealth Ministerial Meeting on Small States (CMMSS), Kigali,
3. Commonwealth Sports Ministers Meeting (CSMM), Tokyo
4. Commonwealth Foreign Affairs Ministers Meeting (CFAMM), New York,
5. SOLM/LMSCJ, London,
6. Commonwealth Finance Ministers Meeting (CFMM), Washington DC

Interviews - Unstructured and semi-structured interviews would be informed by the evaluation questions and modified to target interviewees.

- Key Global leaders/ collaborators/ potential /Partners/ Co-hosts
- Chairs of Meetings
- Members states that have co-hosted major events
- Board of Governors - Regional Reps, Chairs
- Other Intergovernmental Commonwealth Organisations
- Civil Society/ Partners
- Secretariat staff, Programme leads, Senior Directors
- Regional and international inter-governmental Organisations

Focus Group Discussions - A small number of focus group discussions can be conducted in the wings of meetings where appropriate and convenient.

Stocktaking of main global convening initiatives/events related to the global issues areas where the Secretariat's has an active convening role.

Benchmarking of global fora approaches and outcomes of other multilateral and intergovernmental organisations

Network/Stakeholder mapping and institutional analysis can be utilised to assess the degree of the Secretariat's reach, visibility and influence globally and within select global issue spaces.

Document review of programme/corporate/operational and strategy documentation. In this regard, the evaluation will draw on relevant internal monitoring and evaluation reports including the following recently completed reports:

⁴ To be adjusted as plans are confirmed in the wake of clarifications around COVID-19 uncertainties and changes in the current global context.

- The Mid-Term Review of the Strategic Plan
- The Evaluation of CFMM 2018
- Monitoring Report on the Trade Connectivity Cluster Groups
- Monitoring Report on the CLMM
- Founding documents of the various meetings in order to clearly understand the originating mandate
- Accelerating Gender Equality by Gender Mainstreaming, WAMM, 2019

Literature review - The literature review should inform a definitional framework and understanding of key concepts, as well as the status of the evidence base on the effectiveness of policy advocacy and global influencing.

6. DELIVERABLES

- A Final Inception Report that includes a detailed evaluation framework, a work plan including confirmation of mission schedule, the evaluation methodologies that will be utilised and the perceived challenges, risks and mitigation actions that will be followed.
- A Draft Report to be shared with stakeholders for fact-checking and comments
- A Validation workshop to discuss emerging findings, and respond to comments
- A Final Draft Report incorporating the outcomes of the validation and comments
- A Final Submission of the Evaluation Report incorporating comments from the Secretariat's External Peer Reviewers.

The deliverables must be submitted to SPPDD electronically as a Microsoft Word document. The inception report is due within two weeks after the initial meetings with the Secretariat staff and the review of literature. Following the presentation of the Evaluation findings at a seminar at the Secretariat and receipt of feedback comments from the Secretariat and other stakeholders on the draft report, the consultant(s) is/are expected to submit a revised final Evaluation report within two weeks. The draft (and final) Evaluation reports must be no more than 75 pages, excluding all annexes. The copyright of the Evaluation Report shall belong to the Commonwealth Secretariat, however, consultants may be contacted to provide input to the final copy-editing phase.

7. CONFIDENTIALITY

The Commonwealth Secretariat and the Consultant will keep confidential at all times any information or data that may be exchanged, acquired, disclosed or shared in connection with any activity conducted pursuant with the assignment, save where such information is already in the public domain or is project material intended for publication or is required to be disclosed by any applicable law or regulations or where the extent of such disclosure is authorised in writing by the other.

8. SCHEDULE AND LEVEL OF EFFORT

The evaluation is planned to commence in December 2020. It is estimated that 120 consultant days will be needed to complete the study, including agreed fieldwork. Travel

and DSA expenses related to field visits if required will be covered separately as per Secretariat's Travel Policy for external consultants. The final Evaluation Report is expected by June 2021.

9. MANAGEMENT ARRANGEMENTS

The Evaluation will be managed by the evaluation team of the Secretariat's Strategy Portfolio and Partnerships, Digital Division. In this regard, an evaluation staff member would be assigned to support the evaluation team.

A *Programme Steering Group* (PSG) will be constituted to include the project leads of consensus building projects in the Secretariat as well as representation of the Finance and Events & Protocols teams.

The Evaluation's engagement with the Steering Committee will improve ownership of and accountability for the results of the evaluation. Members will serve in an advisory capacity; their main responsibilities will be the following:

- Ensure that adequate support, input and feedback is provided in each phase of the evaluation (TOR development; Inception; Drafting; Validation; Finalisation; Dissemination and Utilisation);
- Facilitate access to key documents and contacts for potential interviewees;
- Participate in the validation workshop on findings and conclusions and assist in the finalisation of recommendations;
- A PSG member may also select to accompany the evaluation's observation mission where the member does not have a programmatic role.

10. PEER REVIEW

All of the Secretariat's Evaluations are subject to external peer review at the Final Draft Report Stage. The Peer Reviewers assessments will inform the Evaluators' finalisation of the report as appropriate to strengthen the soundness of the analysis and the quality of the Report.

11. LOCATION

Given the current impact of COVID-19, the Secretariat's planned meetings and all staff travel are on hold. Some Meetings may move to a virtual setting while others postponed. Given the time frame of the evaluation, the Evaluators should plan for completing this work remotely. However if travel restrictions are significantly lifted and convening and travel permitted, the Evaluators may be asked to physically observe meetings being held during the evaluation period.

12. CONSULTANCY REQUIREMENTS

The consultant(s)/ consultancy team should demonstrate the following:

- Substantive knowledge and experience in undertaking reviews, evaluations and critical research;
- Good understanding of global governance, the work of multilateral and intergovernmental organisations, foreign and diplomatic institutions and how they relate with member states, especially within the Commonwealth; and,
- Demonstrable experience with qualitative evaluation methodologies, including in the conduct of multi country and global reviews, and specifically in the use of approaches appropriate for advocacy, governance and coalition evaluations.
- Knowledge and experience of policy advocacy work and programming matters in global development;
- Excellent communication skills, both spoken and written English, including experience in the production of clear and concise reports for international/inter-governmental institutions, and delivery of messages to a diversified audience;
- Familiarity with Sustainable Development Goals and the international governance architecture.

13. COVID-19

The current global pandemic has transformed work in recent weeks and disrupted the travel components of plans. Evaluation planning, like most areas of work, is significantly affected and the timeline to a return to ‘business-as-usual’ is still unknown. With this in mind, prospective applicants are asked to ensure that their team compositions and remote working technologies are geared to support the completion of this evaluation without travel. Applicants are encouraged to reflect their adjustments in their proposed approaches and methodologies as part of their responses to the TORS and to raise any concerns or risks they foresee.

ANNEX 1: Consensus Building Projects, 2017/18 - 2020/21

Project Code	Project Name	Delivery Team
YACWG1048	Support for Consensus Building	Events and Protocol
YBCWG1014	Commonwealth Finance Minister’s Meeting (CFMM) and G20 Outreach	Economic Policy for Small States
YGCOW1025	Gender Policy Dialogue and Advocacy with Member States	Gender Section
YHCWG1020	Convening of Commonwealth Health Ministers and Senior Officials	SPD-Health
YHCWG1040	Convening of Commonwealth Education Ministers and Senior Officials	SPD-Education
YLCWG1046	Consensus Building On Rule Of Law	Rule of Law
YPCWG1032	Consensus Building	Political Division
YXCWG1012	Commonwealth Connectivity Agenda (Commonwealth Trade Ministers Meeting)	(Trade) Connectivity Section
YYPAF1024	Commonwealth Youth Programme	SPD (Youth, Sports)

ANNEX 2: List of Ministerial Meetings/High Level Meetings and CHOGMS

Financial Year	Name of Meeting	Date of Meeting	Location
2013/2014	Senior Officials of Law Ministries	Sep-13	Marlborough House, UK
	Meeting of Law Ministers of the Small Commonwealth Jurisdictions	Sep-13	Marlborough House, UK
	Commonwealth Foreign Affairs Ministers Meeting	Sep-13	New York, USA
	Commonwealth Ministerial Action Group	Sep-13	New York, USA
	Commonwealth Finance Ministers Meeting	Oct-13	Washington, USA
	The Committee of the Whole Meeting	Oct-13	Marlborough House, UK
	Commonwealth Ministerial Meeting on Small States	Nov-13	Colombo, Sri Lanka
	Pre-CHOGM Foreign Ministers Meeting	Nov-13	Colombo, Sri Lanka
	Pre-CHOGM Commonwealth Ministerial Action Group	Nov-13	Colombo, Sri Lanka
	Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting	Nov-13	Colombo, Sri Lanka
	Commonwealth Ministerial Action Group	Nov-13	Colombo, Sri Lanka
	3rd Global Biennial Conference on Small States	Mar-14	St Lucia
	Commonwealth Ministerial Action Group	Mar-14	Marlborough House, UK
	Annual Commonwealth and Francophonie Dialogue with the G20	Apr-14	Washington, USA
	Commonwealth Law Ministers Meeting	May-14	Gaborone, Botswana
Commonwealth Health Ministers Meeting	May-14	Geneva, Switzerland	
2014/2015	Commonwealth Sports Ministers Meeting	Jul-14	Glasgow, UK
	Commonwealth Foreign Affairs Ministers Meeting	Sep-14	New York, USA
	Commonwealth Ministerial Action Group	Sep-14	New York, USA
	Commonwealth Finance Ministers Meeting	Oct-14	Washington DC, USA
	Regional Youth Ministers Meeting (Africa)	Feb-15	Cameroon, Africa
	Commonwealth Ministerial Action Group	Mar-15	Marlborough House, UK
	Regional Youth Ministers Meeting (Caribbean)	Apr-15	Antigua & Barbuda, Caribbean
	Annual Commonwealth and Francophonie Dialogue with the G20	Apr-15	Washington DC, USA
	Commonwealth Health Ministers Meeting	May-15	Geneva, Switzerland



Financial Year	Name of Meeting	Date of Meeting	Location
	Commonwealth Education Ministers Meeting	Jun-15	Bahamas
2015/2016	Regional Youth Ministers Meeting (Asia)	Jul-15	New Delhi, India
	Commonwealth Ministerial Action Group	Jul-15	Marlborough House, UK
	Regional Youth Ministers Meeting (Pacific)	Sep-15	Apia, Samoa
	Commonwealth Foreign Affairs Ministers Meeting	Sep-15	New York, USA
	Commonwealth Finance Ministers Meeting	Oct-15	Lima, Peru
	Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting	Nov-15	Malta
	Commonwealth Ministerial Action Group	Feb-16	Marlborough House, UK
	Annual Commonwealth and Francophonie Dialogue with the G20	Apr-16	Washington DC, USA
	Commonwealth Ministerial Action Group	Apr-16	Marlborough House, UK
	Commonwealth Health Ministers Meeting	May-16	Geneva, Switzerland
	Global Biennial Conference on Small States	May-16	Seychelles
2016/2017	Commonwealth Electoral Network	Jun-16	Trinidad & Tobago
	Commonwealth Sports Ministers Meeting	Aug-16	Rio, Brazil
	Women's Affairs Ministers Meeting	Sep-16	Apia, Samoa
	Commonwealth Foreign Affairs Ministers Meeting	Sep-16	New York, USA
	Commonwealth Ministerial Action Group	Sep-16	New York, USA
	Senior Officials of Law Ministers (SOLM) / Law Ministers of Small Commonwealth Jurisdictions (LMSCJ)	Oct-16	Marlborough House, UK
	Commonwealth Finance Ministers Meeting	Oct-16	Washington DC, USA
	Commonwealth Trade Ministers Meeting	Mar-17	Marlborough House, UK
	Commonwealth Ministerial Action Group	Mar-17	Marlborough House, UK
	Commonwealth Health Ministers Meeting	May-17	Geneva, Switzerland
2017/2018	Commonwealth Youth Ministers Meeting	Jul-17	Uganda
	Commonwealth Foreign Affairs Ministers Meeting	Sep-17	New York, USA
	Commonwealth Ministerial Action Group	Sep-17	New York, USA
	Commonwealth Finance Ministers Meeting	Oct-17	Washington DC, USA
	Annual Commonwealth and Francophonie Dialogue with the G20	Oct-17	Washington DC, USA
	Commonwealth Law Ministers Meeting	Oct-17	The Bahamas
	Commonwealth Conference of Education Ministers	Feb-18	Fiji



Financial Year	Name of Meeting	Date of Meeting	Location
	Commonwealth Sports Ministers Meeting	Apr-18	Gold Coast, Australia
	Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting	Apr-18	London, UK
	Annual Commonwealth and Francophonie Dialogue with the G20	Apr-18	USA
	Commonwealth Health Ministers Meeting	May-18	Geneva, Switzerland
2018/2019	Commonwealth Foreign Affairs Ministers Meeting	Sep-18	New York, USA
	Commonwealth Finance Ministers Meeting (CFMM)	Oct-18	Bali, Indonesia
	Cabinet Secretaries' Meeting	Mar-19	Marlborough House, UK
	Global Biennial Conference on Small States	Mar-19	Samoa
	Commonwealth Health Ministers Meeting	May-19	Geneva, Switzerland
	Commonwealth Ministerial Action Group	Sept-18 & Jun - 19	New York & London
2019/2020	Commonwealth Foreign Affairs Ministers Meeting	Jul-19 & Sep-19	UK & USA
	Women's Affairs Ministers Meeting	Sep-19	Kenya
	Commonwealth Finance Ministers Meeting	Oct-19	USA
	Commonwealth Trade Ministers Meeting	Oct-19	Marlborough House, UK
	Commonwealth Law Ministers Meeting	Nov-19	Sri Lanka
	CHOGM Liaison Committee	Dec-19	UK
	Commonwealth Ministerial Action Group	Mar-20	Virtual
	Commonwealth Health Ministers Meeting	May-20	Virtual

DELIVERABLES AGAINST PAYMENTS

PAYMENT SCHEDULE

Payments under this contract will be by delivery of results:

Payment Schedule	Deliverables
20% of contract sum	Inception Report submitted to a satisfactory standard
50% of contract sum	Draft Evaluation Report submitted and approved as satisfactory
30% of contract Sum	Final Evaluation Report submitted and approved as satisfactory