



The Commonwealth
Blue Charter

Frequently Asked Questions

The Commonwealth Blue Charter

What is the Commonwealth Blue Charter?

The Commonwealth Blue Charter is a multilateral agreement by all 56 Commonwealth countries to actively cooperate to address ocean-related challenges and meet their commitments for sustainable ocean development including the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), especially SDG 14 (Life Below Water). It was enthusiastically and unanimously adopted at the Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting in April 2018.

What are the Commonwealth Blue Charter Action Groups?

Commonwealth Blue Charter Action Groups implement the Blue Charter. They are member-driven and led by Champion countries. To date, sixteen countries have stepped forward to be Champions on ten topics that they have identified as priorities. Blue Charter Action Groups are: Commonwealth Clean Ocean Alliance (marine plastic); Coral Reef Protection and Restoration; Mangrove Ecosystems and Livelihoods; Marine Protected Areas; Ocean Acidification; Ocean and Climate Change; Ocean Observation; Sustainable Aquaculture; Sustainable Blue Economy; and Sustainable Coastal Fisheries.

What are the benefits of becoming a Blue Charter Action Group member?

- a. Peer-to-peer learning: Action Groups bring together like-minded countries with similar challenges and a shared commitment to address these issues. Over the next few months, we will be rolling out a range of opportunities such as:
 - Online peer-to-peer learning webinars and in-person meetings to share best practice with other governments around the world
 - Access to periodic background documents, case studies and policy reports

- Participation in the Action Group specific online knowledge hub/collaborative platform
 - Participation in capacity building workshops and access to thematic toolkits
 - Training and secondment opportunities for officials to learn and share with other
 - Commonwealth countries
 - Country specific technical assistance (upon request)
- b. Partnerships: Action Group members collaborate with partners and funders to mobilise resources
 - Opportunity to connect with partners from the private sector, philanthropic organisations and academic institutions
 - Support to develop project proposals to pilot innovative programmes through the funding programmes
 - Invitation to annual Action Group meetings
 - c. Communications: Action Groups shine a spotlight on the priority area to promote and accelerate action on sustainable ocean development
 - Op-eds, news stories and press releases to profile major ocean-related announcements
 - by member countries
 - Social media promotion from the Commonwealth Secretariat on Twitter, Instagram,
 - Facebook and LinkedIn platforms
 - Quarterly newsletter on key news and announcements from the Action Group members
 - Invitations to attend Action Group meetings and support for related country-led events

How do I become a member of an Action Group?

Each Action Group is developing its Terms of Reference that outlines the process for a Commonwealth country to become a member of their Action Group. In all cases, governments indicate their interest to join an Action Group through a formal letter to the champion

country(ies) (via the Commonwealth Secretariat). They can also outline their key programmes, expertise and/or assistance needs of their country.

If you are interested in joining the Action Groups, please contact one of the contact officers below to discuss the process for joining the Action Group(s) you are interested in.

Can non-Commonwealth countries join the Action Groups?

Membership of Action Groups is open to all Commonwealth countries. Non-Commonwealth countries who are interested in partnering with an Action Group are requested to express their interest and relevant programmes. Their partnership request will be reviewed on a case-by-case basis by the Action Group with acceptance being at the Action Group's discretion.

Can I join more than one Action Group?

Yes, Commonwealth countries can join more than one Action Group. The number of Action Groups that countries choose to nominate to join will depend on their national priorities and capacity to attend Action Group meetings, events and interact with the champion countries and other members.

Is there a deadline to nominate to be an Action Group member?

There is no deadline. Champion countries welcome potential members at any time. Upon joining an Action Group, the Champion country(ies) will discuss the appropriate timing to formally announce your membership with you. This may be done at one of the many international events supporting oceans management (such as Our Oceans or UN Oceans) or at another event that the group may be holding or participating in.

What are the resource or financial implications of being an Action Group member?

Participation in Action Group activities is voluntary and therefore each Action Group member country will be expected to support their own engagement. Each Action Group member will need to be able to appoint a focal point for the nominated Action Group(s). The focal points will be expected to join webinars, attend Action Group meetings and actively contribute to the online knowledge hub/collaborative platform. Travel support to attend Action Group meetings may be provided to eligible countries, although cannot be guaranteed.¹

Champion countries have initially set up their Terms of References and will develop their Plans of Action in consultation with members. Some champion countries have commenced reaching out to private entities and NGOs to assist in the development of their work plans and discuss resourcing for their Action Group.

In some cases, the Commonwealth Secretariat may also be in a position to assist some Action Group activities. This will be assessed and prioritised on a needs basis.

What is the expected life span of the Action Groups?

The minimum life span of an Action Group is two years. However, most Action Groups expect to continue for five years and beyond.

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¹ Some funding support may be available for attendance at Action Group meetings but cannot be guaranteed.