BRITISH COUNCIL

Alumni UK

Social Action Grants

Call Guidance for Applicants

Introduction

The Alumni UK Grant Programme 2026–27 supports UK alumni around the world to expand their impact as leaders and changemakers in their communities and professional sectors.

Building on the success of previous year's grant initiative, this programme provides small grants to alumni with innovative ideas to address global challenges, test new approaches, or scale existing work. The programme focuses on impact, innovation, and collaboration across the global Alumni UK network.

We recognise that alumni are already leading impactful work. This programme aims to support projects that demonstrate strong potential, regardless of size, by prioritising the quality of ideas, commitment of the applicant, and potential for measurable impact.

Alumni UK

Launched in November 2022, Alumni UK is the global network for international graduates of UK higher education institutions, including those who studied in the UK or through transnational education programmes.

The platform enables alumni to:

- Connect with a global professional community
- Access events, training, and career development opportunities
- Share knowledge and collaborate across borders

International UK alumni are a diverse and accomplished community, contributing to global development and innovation across sectors and career stages.

The Alumni UK Grant Programme

The Alumni UK Grant Programme provides funding of up to £5,000 to support alumni-led projects that:

- Deliver measurable impact
- Introduce innovation or new approaches
- Strengthen collaboration and knowledge sharing

The programme is expected to support approximately 25 alumni-led projects in total, with up to two projects per participating country. Final allocations may vary by country, with some countries receiving one project and others up to two, depending on country participation, proposal quality, and available budget.

Projects will be implemented over a period of approximately 5 months.

Programme Objectives

The programme aims to:

- Support alumni-led initiatives addressing global challenges
- Strengthen engagement within the Alumni UK network
- Promote leadership, innovation, and collaboration
- Generate measurable impact and share best practices globally

Thematic Focus Areas

Applicants must align their project with at least one of the following themes. **(Please note that Applicants based in Australia, Bahrain, Saudi Arabia and Turkey may apply only under the Climate Action & Sustainability theme.)**

Theme 1 - Climate Action & Sustainability

Projects under this theme should address climate change and environmental sustainability through practical, community-focused, or innovative approaches.

Projects that integrate cultural or creative approaches to climate action are particularly encouraged. This may include leveraging local knowledge, heritage, artistic expression, or community traditions to raise awareness, influence behaviour, or support sustainable practices.

Projects may include (but are not limited to):

- Addressing climate change mitigation or adaptation
- Promoting environmental protection, conservation, and biodiversity
- Supporting sustainable practices and resource efficiency
- Strengthening community resilience to climate impacts
- Using arts, culture, or heritage to promote climate awareness and action
- Building on indigenous or local knowledge for environmental sustainability
- Engaging communities through culturally relevant campaigns, storytelling, or creative initiatives

Projects under this theme should demonstrate:

- Climate-sensitive approaches, ensuring environmental responsibility
- Culturally relevant and context-sensitive design, reflecting local realities and knowledge systems
- Innovation, including new ideas, adaptation of existing approaches, or scaling of proven solutions
- Gender-sensitive design, recognising the differentiated impacts of climate change
- Inclusive practices, ensuring meaningful participation of marginalised or vulnerable groups

Examples of projects include:

- Using storytelling, arts, or cultural events to raise awareness about climate change

- Scaling an existing climate education initiative through culturally relevant formats
- Reviving or adapting traditional ecological practices to promote sustainable resource use
- Training communities (e.g. youth, farmers, local leaders) in sustainable practices using locally grounded approaches
- Developing campaigns or workshops that connect cultural identity with environmental responsibility
- Partnering with artists, cultural practitioners, or community leaders to influence behaviour change around sustainability

Theme 2 - Inclusion, Reducing Inequality & Empowerment

Projects under this theme should address social and economic inequalities by promoting inclusion, expanding access to opportunities, and empowering marginalised or underrepresented groups. Projects are expected to go beyond participation alone and demonstrate how they will enable meaningful inclusion, reduce barriers, and support lasting change for target communities.

Projects may include (but are not limited to):

- Promoting inclusive societies and equal access to opportunities
- Supporting marginalised or underrepresented groups (e.g. women, youth, persons with disabilities, or other disadvantaged communities)
- Expanding access to education, skills development, or employment opportunities
- Advancing women's empowerment or disability inclusion
- Addressing social or economic inequalities through community-based approaches
- Creating platforms, networks, or safe spaces for participation and representation
- Strengthening the voice, agency, or leadership of target groups

Projects under this theme should demonstrate:

1. Equality, diversity, and inclusion (EDI) at their core, ensuring fair access and participation

- Clear understanding of the barriers faced by target groups, and how the project addresses them
- Innovation, including new approaches, adaptation to local contexts, or scaling of existing initiatives to increase impact
- Meaningful participation, ensuring beneficiaries are actively engaged rather than passive recipients
- Gender-responsive or gender-transformative approaches, where relevant, addressing structural inequalities and power imbalances
- Feasible and context-sensitive design, appropriate to the local environment and timeframe

Examples of projects include:

- Delivering skills training or mentorship programmes for women, youth, or underrepresented groups
- Scaling an existing initiative that improves access to employment, education, or digital skills
- Creating inclusive community networks or platforms that enable participation and peer support
- Piloting or expanding initiatives that improve accessibility for persons with disabilities

- Running awareness or advocacy campaigns addressing discrimination or inequality
- Supporting community-led initiatives that strengthen leadership, voice, or decision-making power of marginalised groups
- Developing programmes that help beneficiaries transition into employment, entrepreneurship, or further education

These examples are illustrative only. Applicants are encouraged to propose innovative and feasible ideas that respond to local needs and demonstrate clear potential for impact.

Projects under both themes are encouraged to align with relevant UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) where appropriate.

Programme Principles

All funded projects must demonstrate:

- **Innovation**: Introducing new ideas, adapting or testing existing solutions in new contexts, or scaling/improving proven approaches to increase impact. Given the relatively short implementation period, applicants are encouraged to propose projects that are feasible within five months, including piloting, adapting, or scaling existing initiatives where appropriate.
- **Impact**: Clear, measurable outcomes and benefits

2. **Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI):**

    Inclusive and accessible design

    Consideration of marginalised groups

- **Collaboration & Knowledge Sharing**:

    Engagement with alumni networks

    Contribution to peer learning and Communities of Practice

Knowledge Sharing & Alumni Network

Grant recipients (and up to two team members) may be invited to participate in programme learning and knowledge-sharing activities on an ad hoc basis.

These activities may support:

- Informal peer learning and exchange between projects
- Opportunities for capacity strengthening and leadership development
- Connections and collaboration within the alumni network

Project teams will have the opportunity to engage with **established Communities of Practice** (CoPs), including:

- Climate Action
- Disability Inclusion

Through these communities, participants can:

- Share experiences and insights from delivering their projects

- Learn from peers working on similar themes
- Contribute to ongoing discussions within the alumni network

Additional thematic communities may be developed in the future, with relevant opportunities for alumni engagement shared where appropriate.

The working language of programme activities will be English.

Eligibility Criteria

Applicants must:

3. Be a UK alumnus/alumna (having completed at least one term of study at a UK higher education institution, including online or transnational programmes)
4. Be a registered member of the Alumni UK community
5. Be a **national of** and currently **resident in** one of the following eligible countries: **Australia, Bahrain, Brazil, China, France, Germany, Greece, Egypt, India, Indonesia, Malaysia, Nigeria, Pakistan, Saudi Arabia, Turkey, UAE, Vietnam**

- Submit only one application per call
- Not be affiliated with any political party

6. Applicants based in **Australia, Bahrain, Saudi Arabia and Turkey** may apply only under the **Climate Action & Sustainability theme.**

Project Requirements

Projects must:

- Be alumni-led, with the applicant responsible for design, implementation, and reporting
- Align with at least one of the programme themes
- Demonstrate clear, measurable outputs and outcomes
- Be feasible within the proposed timeline and available resources

Projects may be new initiatives or build on existing work, provided they demonstrate clear added value and potential for increased impact. Applicants should ensure they have sufficient time and capacity to manage and deliver the project within the implementation period.

Organisational Affiliation

Applicants may collaborate with organisations (e.g. NGOs, non-profits, universities, or social enterprises) to support project delivery.

In all cases:

- The UK alumni must remain the lead applicant and accountable project manager
- The project must be clearly alumni-led

Funding arrangements:

- In all countries except Brazil, grants will be awarded directly to the alumni applicant

- In **Brazil only**, grants will be awarded to an affiliated organisation (e.g. NGO or non-profit) due to local regulatory requirements. In this case:
    - The organisation will receive and manage the funds on behalf of the project
    - The UK alumni must remain the project lead and retain full responsibility for delivery and reporting
    - Funds must be used solely for project-related activities and not for core organisational costs
    - A clear separation between the alumni's leadership role and the organisation's supporting role must be demonstrated

All affiliated organisations will be subject to due diligence checks prior to grant agreement

Funding Details

The British Council will award grants of up to £5,000 per project.

Payment Structure

- Disbursement managed by Country Teams
- Payment schedule will be defined in grant agreements

Grant funding may be used to cover reasonable, necessary costs directly related to project delivery, including:

- **Project implementation**: workshops, meetings, events, travel, and community engagement activities (e.g. outreach activities, stakeholder consultations, local partnerships, public events)
- **Communication and dissemination**: development of communication materials, outreach activities, event participation, and translation where relevant
- **Accessibility and inclusion**: costs supporting inclusive participation (e.g. accessibility adaptations, mobility support, etc)
- **Equipment and materials**: essential items required for project delivery (e.g. tools, supplies, or technical materials directly linked to the project)
- **Personnel and organisational support**: limited staff time or specialist support directly related to project delivery (must not exceed 20% of the total grant budget)
- All costs must be clearly justified and directly attributable to project activities.

Grant funding <u>may not be used for</u>:

- Core organisational salaries, overheads, or ongoing operational costs
- Unrelated organisational or personal expenses
- Purchase of major assets or capital equipment
- Entertainment costs not directly related to the project
- Any costs incurred before the official project start date, including proposal development

Please contact the British Council Country Team, if you are in doubt which costs can and cannot be covered.

Application Process

Submission Requirements

Applicants must submit:

- Completed application form
- Budget breakdown
- CV(s) of applicant (and key team members if applicable)
- Proof of UK study
- ID documentation
- Applications must be submitted according to instructions provided by the **Country Team**.

Timeline

Activity	**Timeline**
Call launch	June 2026
Application deadline	August 2026
Review and selection	August to September 2026
Grant agreement signing	September 2026
Project implementation	Sept/Oct 2026 – Jan/Feb 2027
Mid-term reporting	December 2026
Final reporting	Feb/March 2027
Global showcase event	April 2027

Deadlines

- The deadline for the submission of applications is **11:59pm AEST, Monday, 24 August**
- The announcement of successful projects will be made by **8 September 2026**
- Funding will cover activities for a 5-month period of implementation, starting in September /October 2026, and ending in January/February 2027.

Submission of application

We recommend avoiding submitting applications at the last minute. Applications shall be judged by a panel of British Council and external experts. Grant agreements will be signed in September, subject to due diligence procedures.

If you experience problems with accessing the application form or any key documents, please contact the country team by email **Enquiries@britishcouncil.org.au** before the submission deadline. If you alert us to any issues only after the deadline, we may not be able to take them into consideration when assessing eligibility of your application.

Selection Process and Evaluation Criteria

Applications will be assessed by Country Teams and finalised by the Central Programme Team. Applications will be scored against the criteria below, and funding decisions will be based on overall score, proposal quality, and available funding.

Evaluation Criteria

Criteria	Weight
Relevance & Objectives • Alignment with one or more programme themes • Clear rationale and defined objectives • Evidence of innovation, adaptation, or scaling of existing approaches to increase impact	20%
Quality of Project Design • Activities are well planned, realistic, and appropriate • Clear link between activities and intended outcomes • Demonstrates integration of programme principles: • Climate & environmental awareness (for climate projects) • Gender sensitivity and inclusion (all projects; inclusion-focused projects should demonstrate strong inclusion approaches)	30%
Impact & Measurable Outcomes • Clear and realistic outputs and outcomes • Clear identification of beneficiaries • Potential for meaningful social, environmental, or economic impact Applicants are encouraged to clearly distinguish between: **Outputs** (what the project delivers): e.g. number of workshops, participants trained, materials produced **Outcomes** (the change the project creates): e.g. increased knowledge, behaviour change, improved access or inclusion Strong applications will demonstrate how project activities lead to tangible outcomes.	20%
Budget & Value for Money • Costs are realistic, justified, and aligned with activities • Appropriate allocation of resources (including personnel caps)	10%
Monitoring, Risk & Feasibility • Feasible timeline and delivery plan • Basic monitoring approach and success indicators • Key risks identified with mitigation measures	10%

Sustainability & Knowledge Sharing • Potential for impact beyond the funding period • Engagement with relevant stakeholders or networks • Willingness to share learning within the alumni network	10%
Total	100%

Monitoring, Reporting and Evaluation

Grant recipients must:

- Submit mid-term and final reports
- Track KPIs including:
  - Outputs delivered
  - Beneficiary engagement
  - Impact achieved
  - Knowledge-sharing activities
- Records must be retained for audit purposes.

Implementation Requirements

Projects must:

- Be delivered as proposed
- Obtain approval for any significant changes
- Comply with local laws and regulations

Alumni Showcase Event

All funded projects will be invited to participate in a global showcase event to:

- Present results and achievements
- Share lessons learned
- Strengthen the global alumni network

Applicant screening

In order to comply with UK government legislation, the British Council may at any point during the application process, carry out searches of relevant third-party screening databases to ensure that neither the applicant, or associated organisations, institutions, partners, directors, shareholders are listed:

- as an individual or entity with whom national or supranational bodies have decreed organisations should not have financial dealings;

- as being wanted by Interpol or any national law enforcement body in connection with crime;
- as being subject to regulatory action by a national or international enforcement body;
- as being subject to export, trade or procurement controls or (in the case of an individual)
- as being disqualified from being a company director; and/or
- as being a heightened risk individual or organisation, or (in the case of an individual) a politically exposed person.

If the applicant or any other party is listed in a Screening Database for any of the reasons set out above, the British Council will assess the applicant as ineligible to apply for this grant call.

The applicant must provide the British Council with all information reasonably requested by the British Council to complete the screening searches. Please read the text to this effect on the application form and tick the box to show that you understand this.

Privacy Notice

The British Council complies with UK GDPR and the UK Data Protection Act 2018 and data protection laws in other countries that meet internationally accepted standards. The British Council will use the information that you provide for the purposes of processing your application, making any awards and the monitoring and review of any grants. The legal basis for processing your information is agreement with our terms and conditions of application (contract). Your information will not be used/shared for any other purpose without your specific consent. British Council reserves the right to publish and share anonymised aggregated information with stakeholders. Individual and organisation details, where collected, are used for monitoring and evaluation and statistical purposes. Gender information and country of origin, where collected, is used solely for statistical purposes. If we need to contact you, we will do so using the contact details you have provided. Under UK Data Protection law, you have the right to ask for a copy of the information we hold on you, and the right to ask us to correct any inaccuracies in that information. If you want more information about this, please contact your local British Council office or see our website: http://www.britishcouncil.org/privacy-cookies/data-protection. We will keep your information for a period of seven years after the project.

Ethics

It is essential that all legal and professional codes of practice are followed in conducting work supported by this call. Applicants must ensure the proposed activity will be carried out to the highest standards of ethical integrity. In the application form, applicants must clearly articulate how any potential ethical and health and safety issues have been considered and how they will be addressed and minimised.

Safeguarding

The British Council is committed to safeguarding both children and adults and to upholding their rights in accordance with all applicable legislation and statutory guidance. As part of that commitment, we require that all staff, and those we work with, including partners and suppliers,

operate within our Safeguarding Policy which articulates our approach to protecting children and adults and promoting their wellbeing. We have robust systems and procedures in place to both prevent incidents (covering, for example, the recruitment of appropriate staff, training and support given so that staff can work safely, and standards regarding the way in which we carry out activities) together with responsive actions necessary to address situations where we become aware that a child or an adult at risk may have been harmed. As part of our policy, all countries have a named Safeguarding Focal Point (SFP) who is supported by a Regional Safeguarding Manager (RSM) and the British Council Safeguarding Team. For further information please see: https://www.britishcouncil.org/about-us/how-wework/policies/safeguarding

Equality, Diversity and Inclusion

In line with the British Council Equality Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) policies, we are committed to fostering an inclusive environment that values diversity and promotes equality. We recognize that a diverse community enriches our collective experiences and enhances our ability to innovate. We strive to ensure that all individuals, regardless of their background, identity, or experience, feel welcomed and empowered to contribute.

We welcome applications from all eligible candidates, regardless of the barriers they may face due to a disability, gender, ethnic background, or any other challenge related to the EDI protected areas. We are committed to offering the necessary support to ensure that everyone has a fair opportunity to succeed.

Applicants are encouraged to ensure equal opportunities in the teams implementing their proposed activity. Please contact us for further information on the British Council's approach. See our Equality Policy here: https://www.britishcouncil.org/about-us/our-values/equality-diversity-inclusion

Impact on the Environment

The British Council is committed to minimising its environmental impact. For this call, we have developed a set of questions which will enable us to understand the expected impact of a proposed project on the climate (and environment more broadly). We welcome information from Applicants regarding environmental considerations such as reducing carbon emissions for their projects (for example, alternatives to national or international travel such as virtual delivery), minimising waste or promoting resource efficiency. Please note, responses to these questions will not form part of the grant assessment criteria. The British Council collects this information for internal purposes only.

Contact Information

For all queries, please contact:

Enquiries@britishcouncil.org.au