

Strategic Plan 2026-2029 (DRAFT)

Strategic Objectives

1. Strengthening Parliaments

Institutional parliamentary strengthening is at the heart of the organisation's purpose in enhancing the effectiveness and adherence to democratic principles of legislatures in our membership. Recognising the importance of strong and independent legislatures, the organisation delivers several programmes to promote good governance and the separation of powers, guided by the Latimer House Principles, including our technical assistance programmes, post-election seminars, and self-assessments against our [*Recommended Benchmarks for Democratic Legislatures*](#). During the 2022-25 Strategic Plan period, several new initiatives have been adopted, including the Disabilities Capital Investment Fund, the Environmental Impact Fund and the Green Mace Initiative.

The 2025 update of the CPA Recommended Benchmarks will provide an important foundation for the delivery of this Strategic Objective in the coming years.

2. Professional development

Professional development lies at the heart of the organisation's mission to strengthen parliamentary democracy. We are committed to equipping Parliamentarians and parliamentary staff with the knowledge, skills, and tools they need to fulfil their democratic roles effectively and with confidence.

Our flagship initiatives - such as post-election seminars - support newly elected Members of Parliament to understand the core functions of their role and the responsibilities of public office. The CPA will work with Commonwealth Parliaments to support effective and high-quality post-election induction programmes.

Through the CPA Parliamentary Academy launched in 2021, our online learning platform accessible to all Commonwealth MPs and parliamentary staff, we offer structured, self-paced learning to support continued professional growth throughout a Parliamentarian's career. The Academy will play a vital role in delivering this Strategic Objective, and we will devise new courses in areas of shared interest to our members - for example, Global Health.

By encouraging a culture of lifelong learning and peer exchange, the CPA will continue to promote high standards of parliamentary practice, enhance institutional resilience, and strengthen governance throughout the Commonwealth.

3. Promotion of Commonwealth values

The CPA is committed to championing the core values of the Commonwealth and supporting the delivery of the UN Agenda 2030 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) across our membership. While our work aligns most directly with SDG 16 on peace, justice and strong institutions, we will continue to assist Parliaments and Parliamentarians in advancing all SDGs within their jurisdictions, across regions, and globally. We aim to achieve observer status at the United Nations during the forthcoming period of this strategic plan. Mindful that our intergovernmental counterparts at the Commonwealth Secretariat have such a status, as do our sister inter-parliamentary association, the Inter-Parliamentary Union, we feel that this is not only a worthwhile endeavour, but a realistic one.

CPA's new international status has the potential to enhance this area of our work. Once the status is fully in place, we will apply to the United Nations for Permanent Observer Status in line with the status already enjoyed at the UN by both the Commonwealth and the Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU).

During the 2022-25 Strategic Plan period, the CPA has found new ways to promote Commonwealth values in partnership with other organisations – for example, CPA Academy courses on the SDGs and human rights; a side event at CHOGM in Samoa on inclusive political leadership and stronger working relationships with the Commonwealth Disabled People's Forum, the Commonwealth Human Rights Initiative and the Commonwealth Equality Network as well as maintaining our partnerships with other Associated Organisations and with partners in the Latimer House Working Group.

We will work with the new Commonwealth Secretary-General and her team with a particular focus on transitional democracies where we can bring the CPA's expertise to assist and make a difference.

In the 2026-29 period, these partnerships will be even more important as we take the opportunity of a new legal status to be bolder and more active in the promotion of Commonwealth values. This will include a renewed focus on climate change and on human development including health and education.

In an era in which democratic institutions face increasing pressures - from declining public trust and disinformation to authoritarian tendencies and shrinking civic space - the role of Parliaments as guardians of democratic values is more critical than ever. Interparliamentary associations like the CPA offer an important platform for peer learning, solidarity, and cooperation in defending and strengthening democracy.

Themes

The CPA Secretariat is committed to mainstreaming six key themes throughout our operations and workstreams. These are the themes that we will conduct our work towards and measure our results against:

Gender equality

Through the Commonwealth Women Parliamentarians (CWP) network, the CPA provides a dedicated platform for advocacy, peer support, and the exchange of best practices on women's political leadership. The network is vital in empowering women Parliamentarians and driving a gender-sensitive agenda.

The CPA will continue to deliver gender-sensitising audits across its membership - an established programme we deliver to help our Parliaments assess and reform internal policies, practices and cultures that may deter gender equality. These audits provide tailored recommendations to support the development of more inclusive and representative parliaments, some of which we can assist with implementing through our technical assistance programmes.

Gender equality cannot be achieved in isolation, and we understand this. Women's rights are intersectional, and our approach reflects the diverse lived experiences of women across the Commonwealth. As part of this commitment, the CPA Secretariat will implement the recommendations of a gender audit of the Secretariat it undertook in 2024.

At CHOGM, the CPA is one of the partner organisations that helps deliver the Commonwealth Women's Forum – this enables the voice of the CWP to be heard at CHOGM and it will remain an important part of the CPA's presence at future CHOGMs. The CPA's regions play an important role in promoting gender equality and we will work with the CWP Steering Committee to ensure the most impactful use of the CWP Regional Strengthening Funds.

Our commitment is further demonstrated through the CWP's annual workshop and its conference held during the [Commonwealth Parliamentary Conference](#), which brings together women Parliamentarians from across the Commonwealth to share experiences and strategies for achieving equality and legislative impact. The Network's Regional Strengthening Funds are another example of support that is given to our member parliaments in recognising the importance of women's voices in their institutions.

In the coming period, the CPA will build on this work to ensure that gender equality remains at the forefront of all aspects of the CPA's work and to support member legislatures in creating environments where women can participate fully, safely and equally.

Rights of Persons with Disabilities

The CPA recognises that full democratic participation is only possible when all individuals, including persons with disabilities, can engage equally in parliamentary democracy. Through the work of the [Commonwealth Parliamentarians with Disabilities \(CPwD\) network](#), the organisation remains committed to championing the rights and inclusion of persons with disabilities within our membership. This includes both supporting Parliamentarians with disabilities and working with the legislatures themselves to remove barriers that limit access to parliament premises, processes, and online access.

A central part of this commitment is the Capital Investment Fund, which continues to assist Parliaments in undertaking essential infrastructure improvements to increase physical accessibility, such as the installation of ramps, lifts, accessible toilets, and signage. These tangible enhancements are paired with knowledge-based support, including a dedicated Parliamentary Academy course on disability rights advocacy, toolkits to strengthen legislative engagement with disability issues, and outreach activities to build cross-jurisdictional awareness. The CPwD network also hosts regular opportunities for engagement during the Commonwealth Parliamentary Conference, providing a platform for Parliamentarians with disabilities and allies to collaborate, share lived experiences, and drive progress across the Commonwealth.

Our work on disability inclusion is also deeply aligned with the CPA's broader human rights and equality agenda. In the coming years, we will continue to integrate a disability-inclusive lens across all our programmes, activities and policies, ensuring that our institutional practices mirror the values we promote - removing barriers, amplifying underrepresented voices, and building Parliaments that work for all.

CHOGM 2026 is an important opportunity for the Commonwealth to take forward its commitment to disability inclusion. This theme will resonate with Commonwealth member countries committed to advancing disability rights, particularly those working to implement and strengthen their commitments under the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD). With over one billion people worldwide living with disabilities, ensuring their full inclusion is essential to achieving the Commonwealth's goals of equality and representation. While many member states have ratified the CRPD, challenges remain in translating commitments into action, particularly in political participation, legal protections,

and accessibility. Parliaments play a key role in scrutinising and overseeing CRPD implementation, ensuring that policies are effectively enacted and enforced. CHOGM 2026 presents a vital opportunity to reaffirm the Commonwealth's commitment to disability inclusion, fostering collaboration to create more accessible and representative political systems across all member states. We plan to deepen ties with the Commonwealth Disabled People's Forum, as the main partner for our work on the rights of persons with disabilities.

Empowering small jurisdictions

The CPA recognises the unique challenges small jurisdictions face - whether due to the impact of climate change, limited resources, geographic isolation, or capacity constraints - and remains committed to ensuring that these Parliaments have our full support and are given a platform within the wider Commonwealth.

Through the [CPA Small Branches network](#), the Association provides a dedicated forum for legislatures in jurisdictions with populations under 1,000,000 to collaborate, exchange knowledge, and amplify their perspectives. In the coming period, the CPA will continue scaling up its support for small jurisdictions through practical and strategic initiatives. This includes bespoke technical assistance, professional development opportunities focused on the contexts of the Commonwealth's most vulnerable jurisdictions, and increased access to resources that respond to the specific legislative, budgetary, and oversight needs of these small legislatures.

One of the network's key tools for targeted support is the [Regional Initiative Fund](#), which empowers small jurisdictions to develop context-specific projects and training at a regional level.

Youth Engagement in Democracy

We will continue to champion youth engagement in politics and provide targeted support to newly elected young Parliamentarians. This includes, among other initiatives, encouraging youth involvement in Post-Election Seminars and engagement with the Commonwealth Youth Forum.

In addition to serving our membership, we will make a concerted effort to inform and involve young people in the principles of democracy and the parliamentary system. Building on the success of previous Commonwealth Youth Parliaments (CYP), we aim to enhance the reach

and impact of future CYPs to inspire greater youth participation in political life and ensure their perspectives are reflected in the CPA's work.

Within the CPA Secretariat, we remain committed to developing an internship scheme, creating opportunities for young people to gain experience in an inter-parliamentary organisation and building the skills required for their future careers.

Technology

Last year, the CPA Secretariat successfully delivered its conference on [*Artificial Intelligence and Disinformation: Democracy in the Age of Deepfakes*](#) in Singapore. This Conference featured presentations from leading experts and delegates from 19 Commonwealth jurisdictions. Last year, we published our [*Parliamentary Handbook on Disinformation, AI and Synthetic Media*](#), produced in partnership with the Organization of American States (OAS). In the forthcoming period, the rise of artificial intelligence will continue to be an important theme in our work.

Climate Change and Sustainable Development

In response to our consultation with members, we will expand our work on climate change and sustainable development. Legislatures play a central role in shaping national outcomes in these areas through oversight, legislation, and passing budgets. We will create new spaces for peer learning and capacity building to support Parliamentarians in navigating these critical areas of public policy.

The new Environmental Impact Fund and Green Mace Initiative exemplify the CPA's commitment to tackling climate change and protecting the environment. As these initiatives develop and grow, we will learn from them to assist our wider work in this area.

Within the broad theme of Sustainable Development, we will focus on human development, especially health and education. While the education dimension of human development is reflected in our ongoing commitment to professional development, delivered most notably through the [*CPA Parliamentary Academy*](#), the health theme represents a new direction for the organisation. Building on our previous work in this space, including toolkits developed in response to the COVID-19 pandemic and on the topic of mental health in parliamentary settings, we will seek to explore how Parliaments can better support equitable and resilient health and education systems, particularly in the context of reductions in development assistance.

We will endeavour to ensure that all these themes are integrated across the delivery of all CPA programmes, communications initiatives, budgets and partnerships. We aim to ensure this approach is consistent throughout the forthcoming period and is adopted as best practice for the CPA beyond 2029.

Monitoring and Evaluation

The 2026-2029 Strategic Plan will commence in January 2026. Each year, it will be complemented by an 'Annual Implementation Plan' that identifies the priority activities and outputs necessary to achieve this plan's objectives. Annual plans will be presented to the CPA Executive Committee for approval over the period.

A monitoring and evaluation framework will be developed in line with the set objectives to enable us to accurately capture and analyse the progress made, drawing upon the monitoring and evaluation work at the forefront of the improved processes and practices within our programmes and communications work. A keen emphasis will be placed on consistency and thoroughness in recording outputs, outcomes, and impacts throughout the lifespan of the Strategic Plan.

This framework will enable the CPA to fulfil our reporting obligations to our membership by providing a clear and enhanced understanding of key results, areas for continuous improvement and value for money. This data will also play a pivotal role in our partnership work as we will be able to present the impact and effectiveness of our programmes to others more accurately.

A mid-term review of the plan will take place in early 2028 to allow us to review progress made, identify and address any issues that have arisen since the plan's introduction, and recognise any further actions required to ensure objectives are achieved within the plan's remaining period. The review will also help ascertain the monitoring framework's effectiveness and whether any changes are necessary.

Enablers

Programmes

Throughout the life of this Strategic Plan, our central focus will be delivering high-impact programmes and projects that are relevant, cost-effective, and of the highest professional standards. Our dual-track approach to programming - professional development and institutional strengthening - ensures a comprehensive offering that is both deep and wide in its reach, delivered through multilateral and bilateral engagement.

We will continue championing our flagship programmes, including our [*Recommended Benchmarks for Democratic Legislatures*](#), bespoke Technical Assistance Programmes, and Post-Election Seminars for newly elected Parliamentarians. With the [*CPA Parliamentary Academy*](#) now well-established as a leading platform for accessible, flexible, and high-quality learning, we will continue to expand and refine our course offerings, delivered both in person and online and in collaboration with reputable academic and training partners. The Academy will remain a key pillar in our efforts to empower Members and officials at every stage of their parliamentary careers.

In tandem with the launch of this strategic plan in January 2026, it is planned for there to be an end-of-strategic-plan report capturing all activities that the organisation has delivered in the reporting period of the last strategic plan.

Communications

Our communications are a critical tool in advancing our strategic objectives. They enhance the visibility, accessibility and impact of our work, strengthen our reputation across the Commonwealth and beyond, and ensure we remain a relevant voice in the parliamentary strengthening community.

In the period of the last strategic plan, we have established new forms of communication and outreach with our membership. Examples would include our [*Parliamentary Conversations in the Commonwealth*](#) podcast, the blogs that we have produced on our website and our greater use of new social media accounts, like Instagram.

Following a comprehensive communications review in 2025 and a major editorial review of *The Parliamentarian* in 2024, we are continuing to modernise and streamline how this tool is used for our work. A branding review is also planned for this strategy. These developments

will help align our communications more closely with our organisational values and evolving membership expectations.

We will continue to embrace innovation by exploring emerging platforms - such as Bluesky, Threads and others - in response to the decline of previously dominant channels. We will further expand our digital presence through varied content, including podcast episodes, blogs, videos and interactive media, ensuring that our communications are inclusive and accessible for our Members, however they interact with us.

In the period ahead, we will emphasise telling the stories of our membership, highlighting the personal experiences, insights and journeys of Commonwealth Parliamentarians and officials. Our communications will also become more outward-facing, as part of a broader focus on engaging with global developments, debates and challenges that shape the world in which our member parliaments operate.

Partnerships

Partnerships are central to advancing the Commonwealth's values and achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Recognising that this requires both global cooperation and strong collaboration between governments, parliaments, the private sector, and civil society, we are committed to forging and sustaining strategic partnerships with Commonwealth organisations, civil society networks, parliamentary strengthening bodies, academic institutions, think tanks, UN agencies, and international parliamentary groups such as the Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU).

We intend to identify and develop partnerships within the CPA's regions. By facilitating open communication and strengthening bilateral and multilateral relationships, the CPA can minimise duplication of efforts in promoting democracy, human rights, and multilateral cooperation, allowing us to enhance our impact.

With many Commonwealth organisations working diligently to uphold the principles of the Commonwealth Charter, we will explore opportunities to strengthen cooperation through umbrella groups such as the Independent Forum of Commonwealth Organisations (IFCO) and the Commonwealth Latimer House Working Group, as well as through direct engagement with Associated Organisations like the Commonwealth Local Government Forum (CLGF).

In our commitment to advancing human rights across the Commonwealth, we will also prioritise closer collaboration with organisations that work in the areas of our respective networks and our cross-cutting themes, including the Commonwealth Equality Network,

the Commonwealth Human Rights Initiative, and the Commonwealth Youth Gender Equality Network.

Governance

Good governance remains a cornerstone of the CPA's Mission, and we are committed to maintaining a high standard of responsible and effective administration, underpinned by transparency, accountability, and strong financial and audit controls.

During the CPA's transition from a UK-registered charity to an international status, we are entering a new chapter that allows our governance structures to dedicate more time and attention to the CPA's core activities - supporting Parliaments, promoting democratic principles, and delivering impactful programmes across the Commonwealth.

The CPA Secretariat will continue to uphold rigorous internal and external reporting standards, including producing our Annual Report and Performance Review, and ensuring continued accountability to our board and stakeholders across all CPA Regions.

Our Executive Committee members will remain supported by the secretariat to carry out their duties in a fully informed and representative manner. We will focus on how these Members can be brought closer to the organisation's work and how they can be utilised as advocates for our work within their Parliaments and respective CPA Regions.

Though the annual conference features various learning and development sessions, it is fundamentally a governance activity. However, it has evolved greatly since the previous strategic plan. In the forthcoming period, having achieved the legal status change, we will look to develop the event further in responding to feedback regarding opportunities to discuss major challenges facing the elected representatives who attend.

Finances and Income Diversification

One of the CPA's enduring strengths is that most of our funding is derived from Branch membership fees - a clear reflection of the strong commitment of our member parliaments. During the last strategic plan period, we took deliberate steps to broaden our income base, and we will continue these efforts, particularly as our new legal status opens fresh opportunities. This approach will help us deliver an ambitious work programme and support our members robustly while safeguarding the organisation's financial stability.

We will remain focused on identifying ways to expand the CPA's revenue sources, including developing new partnerships and exploring alternative funding avenues. We have also hired a Fundraising Manager to review the potential for further income from new sources. Further recruitments will be contingent on the success of this process.

Human Resources

The dedication and professionalism of the secretariat's staff are crucial to the CPA's strategy. The Secretariat will continue to embody and champion the values of the CPA in its work and conduct, undertaking all functions professionally and transparently. We will continue being 'demand driven' to recognise and respect our membership's different needs and preferred approaches.

Following our recent achievement of [Investors in People](#) silver accreditation, we will continue to pursue greater training and professional development opportunities for staff at all levels and prioritise staff wellbeing. This internationally recognised accreditation is celebrated worldwide as a benchmark for excellent people management. We aim to achieve platinum status within the Investors in People framework in the forthcoming period.