

Youth Connect

Inclusive Economic Empowerment Pathways Programme

Selection of implementing partner(s)

Terms of Reference for Expression of Interest

V 2.0

July 2026

Revision history

Date	Version	Change(s)
15.07.2026	2.0	Term 'Capacity building implementing partners' changed to 'implementing partners' Section 9: Application and selection process updated Important dates table updated

GUIDELINES FOR APPLICANTS

Important Dates

SR No.	Activities	Date/Month
1	Date of advertisement for Expression of Interest	10 July 2026
2	Clarifications via email	Till 18 July 2026
3	Last date for submission of Expression of Interest	20 July 2026; 23:59 SL Time
4	Tentative date of result announcement	22 July 2026
5	Implementing partner alignment meeting (face to face) - Discussion and briefing on the programme delivery (scope and budget)	24 July 2026
6	Training of Trainers programme in Colombo	03 – 07 August 2026

Application deadline

Please email your EoI to: thushara.gunasekera@britishcouncil.org no later than **Monday 20 July 2026, 23:59 (SL Time)**. Applications submitted after the deadline **will not be considered**.

1. Background

Youth Connect is British Council's global leadership programme that empowers young people to contribute to positive social and economic change, fostering more peaceful and prosperous communities.

It supports young people to develop the skills, confidence and connections to tackle major challenges like limited economic opportunities, inequality and polarisation.

We work with a range of local, national and international partners online and on the ground in over 30 countries. Together, we create spaces for young people to connect and collaborate for change with their peers and broader ecosystem.

We provide opportunities for young people to develop their leadership abilities, build knowledge and participate in networks to shape better futures for themselves and their communities.

Youth Connect's **Inclusive Economic Empowerment (IEE) Pathways Programme** in Sri Lanka is a structured, phased intervention designed to enable young people to transition into **decent employment (greener jobs) or sustainable enterprise (greener enterprises)** in the emerging **Blue-Green Economy** through a combination of foundational and specialist skills, practical exposure, and mentoring.

The programme is implemented through two phases:

- **Phase 1:** Foundational Skills and Orientation
- **Phase 2 (Employment Track):** Employment Readiness, Work Exposure and Employer Linkages
- **Phase 2 (Enterprise Track):** Enterprise Setup, Formalisation and Growth Readiness

The programme is delivered through **implementing partner(s)**, with strategic oversight provided by a **Country Delivery Team** supported by a **Central Global Advisory Team**.

The primary **geographic focus** of the programme in Sri Lanka is Western province with a secondary focus on selected districts of Central, Southern and North-Western provinces.

The **target beneficiaries** are young people, aged 18-34 years who are:

- aspiring entrepreneurs
- interested to grow their early-stage businesses in the blue-green economic sectors
- unemployed
- transitioning from education to work
- interested in switching to blue-green economic sectors

2. Purpose of the EOI

The purpose of this call for EOI is to **identify implementing partner(s)** to:

- Recruit eligible young people into the programme
- Deliver Phase 1 and/or Phase 2 activities in accordance with approved standards
- Provide mentoring, exposure, and enterprise and/or employment support
- Track participant progress and report against agreed indicators

They are responsible for **execution and participant-facing work**.

The implementing partners are expected to support **informed participant decision-making across pathways**, enabling young people to choose between employment and enterprise options based on their context, readiness, and preferences, rather than directing participants toward a single pathway.

The contract duration is until 31 March 2027, with the possibility of an extension up to 31 July 2027.

3. Scope of Work

Implementing partner (s) will be required to deliver **one or more of the three components of the programme** depending on their capacity and contract:

- (i) Phase 1- Foundational Skills and Orientation, including participant recruitment
- (ii) Phase 2 – Employment Track of the programme
- (iii) Phase 2 – Enterprise Track of the programme

The full scope is detailed below.

A. Participant Recruitment and Onboarding

The implementing partner will:

- Design and implement outreach and recruitment activities in consultation with the British Council country delivery team
- Engage youth through community networks, CSOs, institutions, and local platforms
- Screen applicants against approved eligibility criteria
- Ensure gender, inclusion, and safeguarding commitments are met
- Onboard selected participants into the programme

Note: Implementing partners are fully responsible for recruitment execution, subject to approval and oversight by the Country Delivery Team.

Implementing partners must ensure that all recruitment and outreach messaging **accurately reflects the programme**, and **must not imply** guarantees of employment, income, or business success.

B. Phase 1 – Foundational Skills and Orientation

Where contracted, implementing partner will:

- Deliver Phase 1 online and face-to-face sessions as scheduled
- Facilitate learning on:
 - life skills and personal effectiveness
 - mental wellbeing, resilience and self-care
 - digital literacy
 - financial literacy for personal finance management
 - gender equality, social inclusion and safeguarding
 - introduction to work and enterprise systems
 - advocacy, leadership and civic engagement
- Facilitate reflection and peer learning
- At the end of Phase 1, support participants (through career counselling style activities) to make informed choices between Employment and Enterprise pathways based on their interests, opportunities and strengths, and must **not direct participants toward a specific pathway**.

Implementing partners are expected to use **participatory and reflective facilitation approaches**, supporting participants to analyse, reflect, and make informed decisions, rather than relying solely on instructional or lecture-based delivery.

Phase 1 delivery must focus on **readiness and orientation**, not job placement or enterprise execution.

Implementing partners are expected to embed structured reflection and insights captured within Phase 1 sessions, contributing to Phase 1 Knowledge Management outputs (e.g. insight logs, youth synthesis) as guided by the Country Delivery Team.

Expected outcomes

At the end of Phase 1, participants should:

- demonstrate increased confidence and awareness
- understand different pathways available to them in the blue-green economy
- make an **informed choice** between employment or enterprise pathways

C. Phase 2 – Employment Track

Where contracted, implementing partner will be responsible for delivering the Phase 2 Employment Track for employment readiness, work exposure and employer linkages.

This phase aims to:

- equip participants with sector focused workplace readiness and professional capability
- provide structured work exposure
- enable participants to independently pursue employment opportunities after programme completion

The focus is on **readiness, exposure, and learning**, and increasing employability in the emerging blue-green economy opportunities.

Implementing partner will:

- Deliver work-readiness training and applied sessions on workplace behaviour and professionalism, communication and time management, understanding decent work and responsibilities, inclusive and safe workplace practices
- Identify and engage employers or organisations willing to offer short, structured work exposure opportunities to youth in coordination with the British Council country delivery team (e.g. internships, apprenticeships, attachments, or job shadowing)
- Coordinate placements and participant supervision
- Facilitate mentoring during work exposure
- Support reflection and learning from placements
- Assist participants with job-search tools and strategies

Participation in placements does **not** constitute a guarantee of employment.

Employment pathway activities would focus on:

- understanding workplace expectations and behaviour
- workplace exposure
- reflection and learning from experience

and **would not be designed or communicated as job placement or recruitment mechanisms.**

Expected outcomes

By the end of Phase 2 Employment, participants should:

- demonstrate workplace readiness

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- complete at least one form of work exposure
 - have CVs and job search strategies
 - build initial professional networks
 - show confidence in pursuing employment independently in the blue-green economic sectors

D. Phase 2 – Enterprise Track

Where contracted, implementing partner will:

- Deliver enterprise training modules, clinics, and group sessions
- Support participants to:
 - develop and validate business models and refine products/services
 - formalise enterprises (registration readiness, compliance matters)
 - understand unit economics and breakeven, financial systems and reinforce financial discipline in an enterprise setting
 - access markets and procurement opportunities
 - develop a business plan and enhance investment readiness
- Identify and manage enterprise mentors and business shadowing hosts, exposure visits
- Facilitate structured reflection following mentoring and shadowing
- Promote responsible enterprise practices, including:
 - safe and inclusive workplaces
 - ethical business conduct
 - basic ESG awareness

Expected outcomes

By the end of Phase 2 Enterprise, participants should:

- launch or expand a green enterprise
- demonstrate viable business logic for a green enterprise
- have basic financial systems in place
- show market engagement
- be prepared for independent growth

E. Mentoring, Business Shadowing and Exposure

Implementing partner will:

- Identify suitable mentors and host organisations
- Manage mentoring sessions and shadowing logistics
- Ensure mentoring and shadowing remain:
 - time-bound
 - ethical
 - non-exploitative
- Facilitate learning capture and reflection

Mentoring and shadowing are intended to support **learning, reflection, and decision-making**, and should not create dependency or expectations of ongoing support beyond the programme.

4. Monitoring, Reporting and Learning

Implementing partner will:

- Track participant attendance, progression, and outputs
- Collect data for agreed indicators
- Participate in review and learning sessions
- Support post-project tracer follow-ups where required

Implementing partner will also support **ongoing learning capture in line with the IEE Knowledge Management approach**, including:

- emerging participant perspectives
- perceived barriers and opportunities
- pathway choices and decision-making patterns
- key learning from employment and enterprise experiences

This information will be used to inform programme learning and improvement.

5. Required Qualifications and Experience

Applicants should demonstrate:

- Proven experience delivering **youth employment and/or enterprise programmes**, preferably with exposure to both pathways
- A **strong understanding** of opportunities for young people in the **emerging blue-green economy in the tourism, agriculture and fisheries, circular economy and nature conservation sectors**.
- Strong experience in **facilitating youth learning**, including participatory, discussion-based, and reflective approaches (not only lecture-based training)
- Ability to support young people to make **informed decisions and navigate different pathways**, rather than directing them into predefined outcomes
- Experience engaging with **employers, employer organisations/networks, mentors, MSMEs, or ecosystem actors**, including coordinating work exposure or enterprise support activities
- Demonstrated understanding of **labour market and enterprise realities** in the local context, including informal and emerging opportunities in the blue-green economy
- Ability to manage **participant expectations responsibly**, including communicating clearly about opportunities without over-promising outcomes
- Strong community presence and youth engagement capacity
- Ability to integrate **inclusion, safeguarding, and wellbeing** into programme delivery
- Organisational and **logistical capacity** to manage participants at scale
- Experience working in **adaptive or learning-oriented programmes** will be an advantage.

Phase 1 – Facilitator Profile

Implementing partners must ensure that facilitators selected for this phase:

- Have strong experience in **participatory and discussion-based facilitation**, not only delivering training
- Are confident leading:
 - group discussions
 - reflection exercises
 - conversations on aspirations, expectations, and constraints
- Can support young people to:
 - explore options

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- question assumptions
 - make **informed decisions**
 - Are able to work with **diverse and vulnerable youth**, maintaining inclusive and safe spaces
 - Are comfortable facilitating **open and sometimes sensitive discussions**, without directing outcomes

Phase 2 Employment – Coach / Facilitator Profile

Implementing partners must ensure that facilitators and coaches selected for this phase:

- Understand workplace expectations and can **translate them in practical terms** to participants
- Are able to:
 - guide reflection after work exposure
 - help participants interpret feedback
 - support behaviour change
- Can manage **participant expectations realistically**, especially around jobs and opportunities
- Are comfortable engaging with:
 - employers
 - workplace supervisors
 - informal sector actors
- Avoid framing employment support as:
 - job placement
 - recruitment
 - guaranteed outcomes
- Are able to support participants to:
 - navigate rejection
 - reassess options
 - build confidence independently

Phase 2 Enterprise – Facilitator and Mentor Profile

Implementing partners must ensure that facilitators and mentors selected for this phase:

- Have practical understanding of **enterprise and MSME realities**, including early-stage challenges, specifically in the **blue-green economic sectors**.
- Are able to:
 - challenge ideas constructively
 - push for clarity and realism
 - support disciplined decision-making
- Do not:
 - solve problems for participants
 - manage businesses directly
 - over-coach or create dependency
- Are comfortable guiding participants in:
 - financial discipline
 - risk awareness
 - growth decisions
- Mentors engaged should:
 - provide real-world perspective
 - support reflection
 - maintain **clear boundaries and time-limited engagement**

British Council has scheduled a **Training of Trainers workshop** from **03 to 07 August 2026** in Colombo. The successful implementing partner(s) are required to nominate two of their team members who will be briefed and trained on the IEE delivery model at this workshop. Thereafter, the implementing partners will be responsible for ensuring that all facilitators, counsellors, coaches, and mentors are appropriately briefed on the IEE model and operate in line with programme principles.

6. Performance Expectations

Implementing partner performance will be assessed on:

- Delivery quality and adherence to programme standards
- Recruitment quality and inclusion targets
- Participant retention and engagement

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- Completion of agreed outputs per phase
 - Timely and accurate reporting and contribution to knowledge management

The initial implementation period is expected to be **learning-oriented**, particularly for the employment pathway. Implementing partners will be assessed not only on outputs, but also on their ability to **deliver responsibly, adapt approaches, and maintain alignment with programme principles and safeguards**.

8. Safeguarding and Ethical Standards

Implementing partners must:

- Comply with safeguarding policies and codes of conduct
- Ensure safe learning and work environments
- Report safeguarding incidents immediately
- Avoid any form of exploitation, coercion, or misrepresentation

9. Application and Selection Process

Interested organisations or teams of consultants are invited to submit their Expression of Interest (Eoi) including:

1. Organisational profile / Consultancy team profile, including relevant areas of expertise
2. Indicate the programme component(s) you are interested in (Refer 4. Scope of work above)
3. Composition of proposed delivery team, including facilitators and mentors with their brief biographies highlighting experience relevant to this assignment.
(For teams of consultants, a Lead Consultant should be clearly identified. The Lead Consultant will serve as the primary point of contact and will be responsible for coordinating the delivery team throughout the assignment).
4. Availability of the proposed key personnel for the duration of the programme
5. Experience in designing and/or delivering similar youth programmes
6. A brief outline of the proposed approach to recruiting and engaging young people in the programme
7. A brief outline of the proposed approach to integrating Gender Equality and Social Inclusion (GESI) to programme delivery
8. Indicative hourly or daily rates for facilitation and mentoring for both face-to-face and online delivery

Based on the assessment of Expressions of Interest, the British Council may invite one or more applicants to submit a full proposal. The British Council reserves the right to select one or more applicants and to determine the most appropriate contracting arrangement.

Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion

The British Council is committed to equal opportunities and diversity in all our activities. This includes avoiding bias due to gender, disability, racial or ethnic origin, sexual orientation, or religious belief.

The applicant is encouraged to work towards as equal a gender balance as possible and promote diversity. They must ensure that no one is excluded from participation based on ethnicity, gender, religious belief, sexual orientation, or disability.

For further information on the British Council's approach, and you could also see our Equality Policy at: www.britishcouncil.org/organisation/transparency/policies/equality-diversity-inclusion.

The applicants need to comply with the British Council policies on prevention of fraud, bribery, money laundering and address any other financial and reputational risk that may affect a transparent and fair award process. See: www.britishcouncil.org/organisation/transparency/policies/anti-fraud-and-corruption.

Data protection

How we use your information:

The British Council will use the information that you provide to process your application, make any awards, monitoring and review. The legal basis for processing your information is in agreement with our terms and conditions of the contract.

The British Council complies with the General Data Protection Regulations 2016/679 (GDPR). We process and handle personal information according to these regulations. The personal information that you provide in this application form will only be used to process your application. The information will be viewed by the British Council staff and those who are a part of the decision-making process.

Your information will not be used/shared beyond any partners listed above for any other purpose without your specific consent. If we need to contact you, we will do so using the contact details you have provided. Under the 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 the Data Protection Team at: inforgovernance@britishcouncil.org

Or see our website: www.britishcouncil.org/privacy-cookies/data-protection.

We will keep your information for a period of seven years after the project.

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 nor any of the applicant's employees, partners, directors, shareholders is listed:

- 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 opportunity.

The applicant must provide the British Council with all information reasonably requested by the British Council to complete the screening searches.

Contact Details

Should you require any clarification, please direct your queries to Thushara.Gunasekera@britishcouncil.org on or before 18 July 2026.