

Commonwealth Association of Planners – Young Planners Conference Grant Application Submission

How young planners in the Commonwealth can contribute to making cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable, with examples of good practice.

The United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) comprises 17 clearly defined statements on which to take collective action in tackling poverty, climate change and social injustice.

The planning profession as a collective has an important role in implementing the goals. In particular, Goal 11 will *“make cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable.”*

This is a bold statement, aspirational and empowering. Young planners across the Commonwealth have a duty, a responsibility to take active roles in implementing our commitments through the Sustainable Development Goals.

Young planners are in the early stages of their careers and can provide fresh perspectives from their experiences, whether in their early careers or in their personal lives.

This presents a significant opportunity for young planners to grasp the challenge of promoting the Goals as a series of planning-related issues that should be tackled at all levels in all governments, including amongst the general public and decision makers.

Young planners can and should be at the forefront in changing attitudes to look more openly at how the various planning systems in the Commonwealth can contribute towards meeting these goals. Universities, academic institutions and government education departments should work closely with the respective Commonwealth planning bodies and members to promote the event sustainable development goals through their relevance education courses and qualifications. This means on the one hand that schools colleges and universities, whether in their land use planning or related disciplines, should be looking at how the events as they will do our goals can be promoted in wider discourse through their delivery teaching methods and subjects.

Young planners should be at the forefront in promoting the UN sustainable development goals both to other planners to their educational pursuits and also at the practical level in their careers. Education is clearly an important element in achieving and implementing the sustainable development goals.

For example, the Canadian Institute of Planners (CIP) has a long-standing commitment to advance community planning research amongst its nation of young planners. CIP created the Planning Student Trust Fund in 1989 and

provide an annual scholarship program. Since receiving charitable status a year later, over 100 scholarships have been awarded, approximately \$300,000 Canadian dollars in financial support students.¹

The fund represents a long-time commitment by providing scholarships to students studying in the field. CIP manages several different scholarships and bursaries that are offered to CIP student members enrolled full-time in accredited Canadian planning programs.

The CIP-PSTF Board of Directors is comprised of planners from across Canada. These Directors promote, manage, and govern the administration of the fund.

Scholarship recipients are eligible to attend CIP's national conference, to receive their honours in person and also connect with other students, professionals and academics, enabling them to share their experiences.

Recent scholarship recipients have included studies on addressing barriers to inclusive climate action in Vancouver, meaningful municipal consultation and engagement as a key part of reconciliation in planning with indigenous peoples, and building natural disaster resilience through open spaces.

This wealth of young, dynamic research projects is supported by CIP and demonstrates a commitment to nurturing future planners as a means of contributing towards inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable communities.

Other planning membership organisations actively promote planning research, education and dissemination of ideas beyond the profession. The award is therefore not confined to members or students of the RTPI. The study consists of live blog posts, images and video during the visit and a written report at completion.

In the UK, the George Pepler International Award is awarded biennially. Significantly, it was established to *"encourage young people of all nationalities who had a desire to serve their fellow human beings through the medium of town and country planning"*.

The Award is a bursary granted to a person in their first ten years of post-qualification experience wishing to undertake a short period of study on a particular aspect of spatial planning in the UK or internationally.

The most recent recipient, Isobel Bruun-Kiaer, offers a grounded example of research into resilient and sustainable planning actions in a Commonwealth nation. Isobel travelled to New Zealand to study the role of spatial planning in paving the way to resilience to climate change in the city of Tauranga. Isobel met with stakeholders to further her understanding of how they will work together to balance competing local economic, social and environmental priorities. The research was framed around a series of questions, looking at

¹ <http://www.cip-icu.ca/Honours-Awards/Scholarships>

how climate change (risk and resilience) is articulated in existing and forthcoming policy strategies, the stakeholders involved, their interaction and lessons that can be drawn for future practical and policy action.

Isobel's study utilised technology – social media and blog posts – to articulate her thoughts and findings. The blogs are available online and show how education, engagement and technology can be used positively by young planners to further Goal 11; in this instance, research into climate change resilience and sustainability.²

The themes of education and outreach are well exemplified in an RTPI award winning planning strategy. In Scotland, the TAYPlan Strategic Development Plan provides a positive spatial strategy for growth and investment across the Tay city region area with a strong focus on collaborative partnership working from the outset.³ Amongst the Plan's awards nominations was its Youth Engagement as a finalist in the RTPI Awards for Excellence in Planning for Wellbeing 2017.

The Plan's four constituent councils and the University of Dundee jointly ran youth engagement work during 2015 and 2016 and comprised school visits talking to over 400 young people across 10 high schools about planning and shaping the future. Teams of four pupils from the 10 schools then attended daylong youth camps in June 2015 and in June 2016. These activities help young people learn about what planning is and how they can participate as active citizens to influence how their place changes. It also helps those who may be interested in planning as a career option. The Plan was commended for being easy to read and ambitious, moving the plan-making agenda forward.

In my professional career and experiences as a young planner, I have championed outreach and engagement beyond the planning profession. I have been keen to develop and foster cross-sector networking with other young people, professionally and in wider social contexts. It is vital that the planning profession faces outwards and develops dialogues with other professional stakeholders.

These examples show how young planners have a vital role in engaging with and developing professional contacts, networks and volunteering our precious time to promote the aims and aspirations of Goal 11. It also demonstrates there is a wealth of young, dynamic talent who are passionate about the profession and committed to advancing dialogue on issues of worldwide significance.

Underpinning these examples is education, arguably the most powerful and impactful tool at young planners' disposal. Effective links from the classroom into our professional work environments must be developed. Professional

² <http://rtpi.org.uk/events/awards/george-pepler-international-award/20162017-latest-blog/>

³ <https://www.tayplan-sdpa.gov.uk/>

awards for young planners are a positive measure and this should be expanded along with professional networking opportunities. Award winning strategic plans offer lessons for engaging with young people and new technologies including twitter and blogs can disseminate young planners' experiences. Meaningful engagement with young people can be rewarding and give added meaningful context for future long-term planning; this is particularly important when we step back and think about who we are planning for.

Planners are naturally strategic thinkers. Anticipation and adaptation to future events are central components in a planner's toolbox. Developing our connections with others within and outside the planning profession is important to advance the SDGs. The examples described above are encouraging steps for young planners across the Commonwealth nations and show how incremental steps can drive forward Goal 11 and the wider, strategic ambitions within it.