
Strategic Plan

2024 - 2029



*September 2026



Introduction

Scotland faces unprecedented challenges, and none of them are short-term. To meet them, we need everyone to be able to deliver at their best.

Being a leader in Scotland’s voluntary sector is an incredible job. You occupy a key pivot point in a sector that does so much to underpin and support our society in Scotland. This includes supporting the most vulnerable in our communities, funding cutting-edge medical research, and delivering a diverse range of activities such as cultural and sporting events. Without the committed, strong, and adaptable leaders of voluntary organisations, Scotland would be a much more impoverished place

However, being a leader of a voluntary organisation is not, and has never been, easy. There has always been a tension between need and resources in an ever-changing environment. In recent years, accelerated by COVID-19 but not solely caused by the pandemic, these pressures have intensified and multiplied.

This strategy is built on listening. On hearing leaders talk about their situation and what they need to effectively support their organisations, enabling them to achieve their missions. We heard that we needed both to support leaders directly, and to play a role in influencing and changing the context in which voluntary organisations in Scotland work.

We know this will not be easy. Time is precious, so we will ensure all our work to support leaders is considered, reflects need, and is of the highest quality and impact. We also know that looking outwards to change the system leaders operate in may also be challenging.

We will work with and for leaders to make sure that the conversations we need to have across all of Scotland’s sectors occur and, when necessary and appropriate, are open and frank. We will ensure we all have the skills and abilities for these conversations to be appropriate, meaningful and productive.

Increasing Our Strength Together

As leaders we often know the difficult questions we need to ask, but as humans our work is hard and challenging. We need support to know how to ask, how to receive the responses, and to work through things together. That's where ACOSVO comes in. We will continue to be there for you, through our networks, peer connection and support. We will work through finding answers collectively as we all become stronger in coming together.

We will continue to listen and learn, and our work will be rooted in this approach. We commit to sharing the learning in key spaces for policy and operational development, and implementation.

We understand that, at times, voluntary sector leadership can be a lonely experience. We will build networks and safe environments where leaders can openly share their challenges, learn from others, and gain and give support to each other.

Looking Outward to Move Forward

While developing this strategy, we learned that leaders put high value on the spaces we create for peer support and connection. We will continue to build on this foundation and our existing strengths will enable us to create the conditions, both in our approach and in the learning we offer, to hold hard conversations positively.

In addition to building leadership networks, we will take time to look outward. We will look to draw in global learning and expertise to assist leaders in being the best they can be.

Scotland's challenges are not hard to seek. We are now in a position where we must find new ways to make an impact in constrained environments.

Technology may help us, but we also know we need to find new ways of making change. We will work with leaders and all sectors in Scotland to develop innovative responses, but without losing the value of the powerful work that is crucial today.

Creating Lasting Positive Change

Scotland's voluntary sector leaders are already an incredible group of people delivering amazing work. We believe in helping to shift the balance from those things that pull us down, towards liberating even more potential.

Scotland needs leaders' energy, commitment, and talent to be focused on moving forwards to find long-term solutions, not just firefighting with day-to-day challenges and the stale context the sector often finds itself in.

We have passion and determination in being here for Scotland's voluntary sector leadership, and we invite you to be part of our work and create lasting positive change together.





Vision

Our vision is that voluntary sector leadership in Scotland is influential, resilient and trusted.



Mission

We will bring leaders together and develop deep relationships, providing support and challenge to help create change.

Values

Courageous



Collaborative



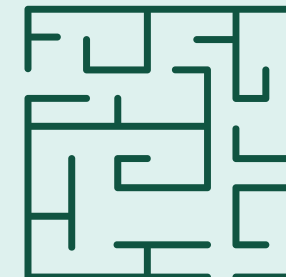
Inclusive



Authentic



Open to
Challenge

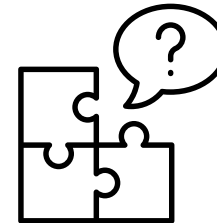


Strategic Aims



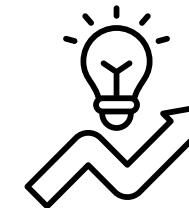
VOICE

We will advocate with, and for, voluntary sector leaders so the sector can make its full contribution to Scotland's future.



CHALLENGE

We will support leaders in developing the skills and confidence to hold the hard conversations needed to make the changes we seek for Scotland.



CHANGE

We will work with leaders to drive innovation to deliver a fair, inclusive, diverse and sustainable Scotland.

Strategic Objectives

VOICE

Through their work, Scotland's voluntary sector leaders support hundreds of thousands of people in Scotland. It is crucial that what is heard from individuals and communities influences positive change. Not only in specific thematic areas, but across the way voluntary sector organisations are considered, valued, and woven into the responses Scotland delivers for its population.

- We will distill key and crucial knowledge about the sector to drive new thinking.
- We will facilitate connections with the right people to collectively understand critical issues.
- We will raise the profile and enhance public understanding of the value of voluntary sector leaders.

CHALLENGE

We all know that things need to change as we move forward. Resources are more constrained and need is increasing. These realities must be acknowledged and maturely discussed so even if difficult decisions need to be made, they can be made in a constructive manner. This will enable us to develop new ways to support individuals and communities as we move forward.

- We will make strong relationships across the breadth of the sector as a foundation for all our work.
- We will create a culture where leaders can safely have open, frank and hard conversations amongst each other, and with leaders in public and private sectors.
- We will promote long-term thinking and the development of new solutions to intractable problems.

CHANGE

Scotland's voluntary sector leaders are already an incredible group of people, but we know we need to keep looking outwards so our thinking remains fresh, we can bring in new ideas, and develop our practice. This will contribute to leaders' balancing the pressure and demands of the commitment they give with their wellbeing and need for significant resilience. We will do this in a way that doesn't create additional pressures for leaders but that has their wellbeing front and centre.

- We will pull in cutting-edge thinking and knowledge from both inside and outside the sector to develop new responses.
- We will work alongside leaders to understand, learn and collaboratively develop new responses to the key issues we face.
- We will increase the sector's ability to engage successfully with change through sharing broad expertise.
- We will support leaders to navigate change positively with recognition of the importance of wellbeing.

Summary

In the next few years, we intend to accelerate our activities, and extend our ambition and reach. Our strength will be built on expanding our membership, and working with all members to use and liberate voices. To move towards parity of esteem with private and public sector colleagues when being ‘in the room’ and to use the sector’s compassion, agility and canniness to find the new ways forward some of our communities so desperately need.

The pandemic confirmed that the sector could do critical things others couldn’t. We know that by learning and working together, and supporting each other, we can move forward to meet future challenges positively and succeed.

We are excited to move forward. We will use our collective power and innovative spirit to drive meaningful change. Work with us to shape a brighter future for Scotland.



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A large, decorative graphic on the right side of the slide. It consists of several thick, curved, teal-colored lines that sweep upwards and outwards from the center, creating a sense of movement and energy. The lines are arranged in a symmetrical, fan-like pattern.

Thank
You

*Updated September 2026, Originally published October 2024
