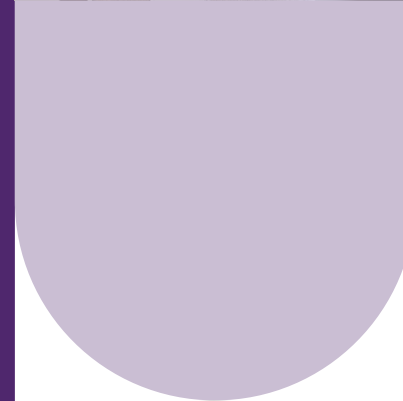
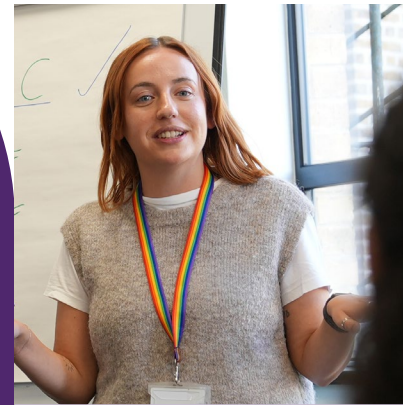


TOGETHER FOR A  
**STRONGER**  
SOCIETY



# FOREWORD

**Civil society's superpower has always been people and organisations coming together around a shared purpose: to build a fairer, more connected and more compassionate society. At a time of growing complexity and challenge across the UK, civil society's role has never been more important or more in need of defence.**

Our 100-year history is rooted in ensuring those who support communities get the support they need. Now, as we develop our new strategy and define the future of this incredible institution, we've been asking ourselves "what's next?"

After deep consultation, engagement and discussion across our members, partners and stakeholders, this strategy sets out our big ambition: to build a future where civil society is, finally, truly valued. It sets out an unshakeable commitment to creating the conditions for civil society to thrive; enabling deeper impact, strengthening our collective voice, and ensuring that civil society is recognised as an essential partner in creating a better future for communities across the UK.

Achieving our ambition is built around a simple but powerful idea: that our membership, evidence, influencing and partnerships must reinforce one another to create lasting change. By strengthening this connected system, we will deliver greater value for our members, build a stronger and more representative voice for civil society, increase our influence with government and decision-makers, and ensure NCVO remains resilient and sustainable for the future.

We will continue to champion the vital role of charities and volunteers, provide practical support and insight to our members, and work in partnership across sectors to help civil society flourish. We will also build a productive and ambitious relationship between government and civil society; a partnership that works for both sides, and is rooted in trust, evidence and shared purpose.

This strategy is both ambitious and grounded. It reflects our need to address the very real challenges we know our sector is facing, but also helps the organisations we represent to take advantage of the enormous opportunities ahead. Above all, it reflects our belief in the power of collective action and the vital contribution civil society makes every day in communities across the country. **We know that together, we can build a stronger society.**



**Jude Sheeran**

Chair NCVO

# WHY THIS STRATEGY MATTERS



**Every day, civil society improves millions of lives. It supports people through crises, strengthens communities, creates opportunities and helps build a fairer society. It is a vital part of the UK's social fabric.**

But the organisations that make up civil society are facing growing pressures. Rising demand, financial constraints, workforce and volunteer challenges, increasing inequality and rapid technological change are making it harder to deliver impact while investing in long-term resilience. At the same time, public support for community action remains strong, new ways of participating and collaborating are emerging, and technology is creating new possibilities for reach and impact.

Members, partners and stakeholders told us the sector needs a stronger collective voice, better collaboration, clearer representation and trusted evidence to help improve the conditions in which civil society operates.

We know building stronger communities and a fairer society depends on having a connected and resilient civil society. And our members told us NCVO has a unique and important role to play in achieving it.

**This strategy is our response.**

# NCVO'S DIRECTION FOR THE FUTURE



## Our purpose

We create the conditions for civil society to thrive - strengthening its resilience, connection and influence so organisations can deliver impact now and for generations to come.

## Resilience

The ability of civil society organisations and communities to withstand, adapt to and recover from social, economic, political and environmental pressures, while sustaining their mission, capability and long-term impact.

## Connection

The strength of relationships, collaboration and shared infrastructure across civil society, enabling organisations, communities and partners to work collectively, share knowledge, amplify voice and achieve greater impact together.

## Influence

The ability of civil society to shape public policy, narrative, decision-making and the wider conditions in which it operates, ensuring the sector's voice, expertise and lived experience are recognised and acted upon.

## Our vision

A future where civil society is truly valued as the beating heart of our communities and the backbone of a fair and inclusive society.

# OUR STRATEGY MODEL



To stay effective and continue making a difference, NCVO will focus on building the foundations for long-term change. This strategy is not a list of separate projects. It shows how different parts of our work fit together to strengthen civil society over time.

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Membership without influence lacks impact.

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Evidence without legitimacy lacks authority.

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Advocacy without partnership lacks scale.

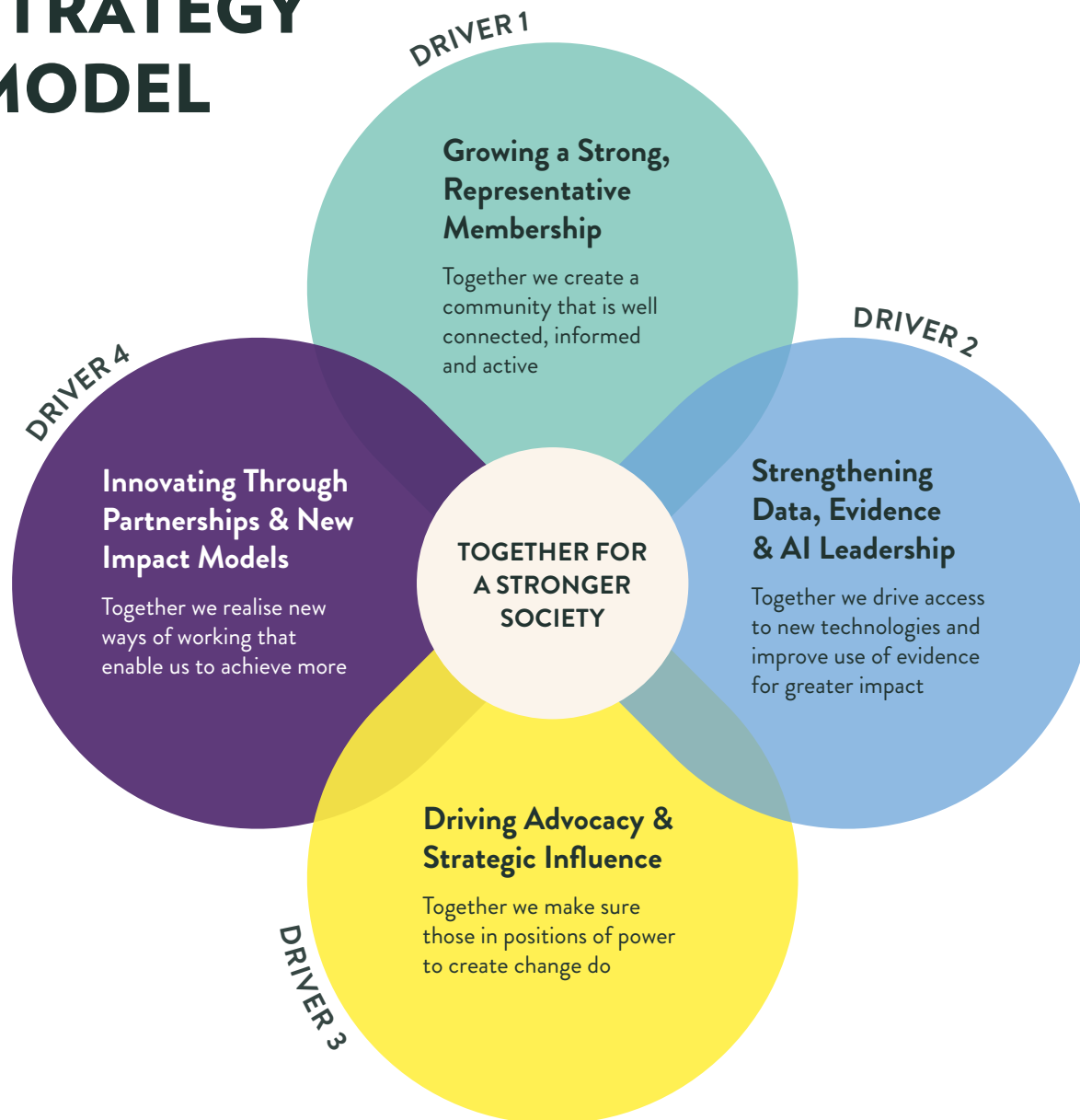
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Commercial sustainability without purpose lacks mission integrity.

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Our strategic focus is therefore on building and operating a system in which these elements work together, continuously reinforcing one another.

# OUR STRATEGY MODEL



To achieve our ambitions we need to move away from a model focused mainly on delivering services. Instead, we will bring together people, ideas, skills and relationships from across civil society and turn them into useful evidence, stronger influence and shared tools. We will use what we learn and build to strengthen our work over-time.

NCVO will continue to work in partnership across the breadth of issues facing civil society; from volunteering to race equality, from local community action to national infrastructure. Our strategic focus, however, is on where we add unique system-level value: convening, enabling, protecting and amplifying civil society, rather than trying to deliver everything ourselves.

**To deliver this, we have designed a small number of interconnected ‘drivers’ that together form the engine of our strategy.**

## DRIVER 1

# Growing a Strong, Representative Membership

Together...

We create a community that is well connected, informed and active

### What it means

Our membership is the foundation of our legitimacy for influence and our connection to civil society. We will build a broader, more representative and better engaged community that reflects the diversity of the sector and better understands what members value.

We will provide practical support, particularly for smaller charities, and explore new membership categories, such as for B Corps, to strengthen connections across the wide range of organisations that want to strengthen civil society. Our focus is creating a clearer and more meaningful membership proposition: one that delivers value, creates opportunities for learning and connection, and gives members a stronger voice.

### What success looks like

Success means a larger, more diverse and engaged membership, across geography, size, identity and cause, that sees clear value in being part of NCVO. Members increasingly use our services, share insight and shape our influencing work. In turn, their perspectives strengthen our evidence, influence and legitimacy, creating a stronger partnership between members and NCVO.

### What will you see?

Over the life of this strategy, we expect to:

- Grow our membership, and improve engagement, retention and participation
- Clarify and differentiate our membership proposition
- Strengthen opportunities for peer connection, learning and collaboration
- Ensure member insight more directly informs our policy, evidence and influencing work
- Improve accessibility and relevance for smaller and under-represented organisations

## DRIVER 2

# Strengthening Data, Evidence & AI Leadership

### What it means

We will strengthen NCVO's role as a trusted source of insight, evidence and analysis for civil society. This means investing in better use of data, developing our capability in AI and digital technologies, and helping organisations make informed, confident and responsible decisions. We want to help civil society better understand itself, demonstrate its value and respond to change. We will bring together evidence and practical knowledge, and support members to use data and AI safely, ethically and effectively for greater impact.

Together...

We drive access to new technologies and improve use of evidence for greater impact

### What success looks like

Success means NCVO is recognised as a trusted source of evidence on civil society. Members use our insight, tools and guidance to inform their strategy and operations, while policymakers and others draw on better evidence to shape policy. Over time, more organisations use data and AI responsibly, strengthening the sector's ability to influence policy, funding and public understanding.

### What will you see?

Over the life of this strategy, we expect to:

- Invest in data, insight and analytical capability
- Improve how we collect, connect and use evidence across NCVO
- Provide practical guidance, tools and learning to help organisations understand, govern and use AI responsibly, ethically and proportionately
- Produce more accessible and decision-shaping evidence products
- Strengthen partnerships that improve sector-wide insight and reduce duplication

## DRIVER 3

# Driving Advocacy & Strategic Influence

Together...

We make sure  
those in positions  
of power to create  
change do

### What it means

Our advocacy work will focus on creating the conditions for civil society to thrive - strengthening its resilience, connection and influence so organisations can deliver impact now and for generations to come.

Our priorities will evolve in response to member insight, evidence and changes in the external environment. We will focus on the issues where NCVO can achieve the greatest system-level change, and where collective action can improve the operating environment for civil society as a whole.

### What success looks like

Success will mean civil society has a stronger visibility, a clearer collective voice and greater influence in public debate and policymaking. Decision-makers, in all parties, at all levels, will recognise the sector's value and engage with its expertise, while members see NCVO as a trusted advocate and feel confident contributing to, and delivering, influencing activity.

### What will you see?

Over the life of this strategy, we expect to:

- Assess the risks of a changing political landscape and prepare the sector for those changes
- Focus our influencing on a smaller number of high-impact priorities
- Strengthen the connection between evidence, member insight and policy development
- Support more organisations to confidently participate in influencing and public debate
- Contribute to stronger public understanding of civil society's role and impact

## DRIVER 4

# Innovating Through Partnerships & New Impact Models

### What it means

We will work more intentionally through partnerships, collaboration and shared infrastructure to achieve impact that no organisation could deliver alone. We will convene coalitions, support collective action and enable others to lead where they have the greatest expertise, reach or trust. Our focus will be on strengthening civil society as a whole, rather than where members or specialist organisations are better placed to lead. Our role will be to catalyse innovative collaboration, share good practice and help new alliances form.

Together...

We realise new ways of working that enable us to achieve more

### What success looks like

Success means NCVO is recognised as a trusted partner that helps organisations work together more effectively. Members and partners see greater value through shared learning and coordinated action.

New spaces create conversations that wouldn't have happened before. Over time, this contributes to a more connected and resilient civil society, with stronger relationships between national and local organisations, infrastructure bodies and frontline groups.

### What will you see?

Over the life of this strategy, we expect to:

- Build deeper and more strategic partnerships
- Strengthen collaboration between national and local civil society organisations
- Create opportunities for shared learning, infrastructure and delivery
- Support collective approaches to complex system-wide challenges

## STRATEGY SUMMARISED

# TOGETHER FOR A STRONGER SOCIETY



### Need

Civil society is at risk of further losing resilience and weakening under growing systemic pressure.

### Vision

A future where civil society is truly valued as the beating heart of our communities and the backbone of a fair and inclusive society.

### Purpose

We create the conditions for civil society to thrive - strengthening its resilience, connection and influence so organisations can deliver impact now and for generations to come.



[www.ncvo.org.uk](http://www.ncvo.org.uk)  
[hello@ncvo.org.uk](mailto:hello@ncvo.org.uk)

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NCVO