

ACEVO: our strategy from 1 April 2025

acevo

imagine, inspire, improve

Our north star: developing, supporting and enabling inspired, impactful, progressive civil society leaders

Our vision: that civil society leaders make the greatest possible impact

Our mission: to be a powerful catalyst for inspired, inspiring and impactful civil society leadership

We will deliver our mission: by being an inclusive, values-driven membership organisation providing meaningful benefit to the leaders of civil society

Our values: we are member-driven, connected, inclusive, ambitious and honest

What are the drivers for our strategic priorities?

- In recent years we have prioritised support and connection for our members. We have lost some focus on leadership development and leaders' impact.
- Leadership is dynamically evolving. We want to understand, develop and advocate for the most progressive and inclusive forms of civil society leadership.
- The existing pathways and platforms for leadership development within our sector can be seen as excluding, elitist or difficult to access. We have not used our convening power to address these issues.
- Investment (of time and money) in leaders' development is frequently de-prioritised in our sector, by trustee boards and by leaders themselves.
- Civil society leaders will continue to need tailored support to help them cope with the varied challenges of their role if they are to thrive and have maximum impact, and offering that support to our members is a key aspect of our membership offer.
- Civil society leaders need a political, regulatory and governance environment in which they can work effectively to have maximum impact. In each of these areas there are barriers and unhelpful practices that get in the way of maximum impact for leaders and their organisations.
- There is some confusion (among members and stakeholders) about the issues that do or do not fall within ACEVO's mission. We need to be very clear about what sits within our core purpose, and what we will leave to others to lead when we can.
- We are a successful and stable organisation – if we are to remain so and continue supporting our members we must pay attention to the areas in which we can continue to develop and strengthen ourselves for the future.

Two overarching commitments:

Antiracism, race equity and inclusion will continue to be at the heart of our values, our thinking and our work, and we will continue the journey of learning and striving to drive progress in partnership with our members, our partners, our colleagues and our stakeholders.

Our definition of racism includes harm caused to individuals of African, Caribbean, East Asian, Arab and South Asian backgrounds, Jewish people, and Gypsy, Roma and Traveller + communities. Our definition of inclusion extends to all people who do or may experience harm, inequity, oppression or injustice because of their personal characteristics, including sexuality, gender identification, disability, faith or belief.

Climate consciousness and climate justice is an area in which we commit to deepen our knowledge and understanding, for ourselves as an organisation and alongside our members, and we will use that understanding to inform our operational and strategic decision making

Four strategic themes ...

Inspired,
impactful,
progressive
civil society
leaders

Effectively
supported
civil society
leaders

An enabling
environment
for civil
society
leaders

Our own
strength,
resilience
and stability

... four overarching objectives:

Inspired, impactful, progressive civil society leaders:

Objective: to co-develop models, pathways, programmes and platforms which support progressive, inclusive, impactful leadership

Effectively supported civil society leaders:

Objective: to provide responsive, relevant support that helps civil society leaders to thrive and work at their best

An enabling environment for civil society leaders:

Objective: to ensure that civil society leaders have the political, regulatory and governance environments that will enable them to operate with maximum impact

Our own strength, resilience and stability:

Objective: to ensure we can continue to deliver our mission sustainably and with impact now and in the future

Inspired, impactful, progressive civil society leaders:

Objective: to co-develop models, pathways, programmes and platforms which support progressive, inclusive, impactful leadership

Individualised
leadership
development
services

Delivery of our
three-year
leadership
development plan
2024 - 2027

Clear pathways
towards
progressive,
inclusive and
impactful civil
society
leadership

Normalising
investment in
leadership
development in
civil society

Effectively supported civil society leaders

Objective: to provide responsive, relevant support that helps civil society leaders to thrive and work at their best

Connections and
relationships

1:1 and small
group support

'1: many' support
and prevention

An enabling environment for civil society leaders:

Objective: to ensure that civil society leaders have the political, regulatory and governance environments that will enable them to operate with maximum impact

Advocacy:

audience: government, legislators,
regulators

Influencing:

audience: chairs/boards, members
and sector leaders, regulators

Our own strength, resilience and stability

Objective: to ensure we can continue to deliver our mission sustainably and with impact now and in the future

Impact

Governance

Culture

Planning

Workforce

We will know we have been successful in the delivery of our strategy when ...

... leaders in civil society tell us that they understand the pathways they can follow, with our support, towards impactful leadership; and that those pathways are accessible and inclusive

... we lead a diverse coalition of insight and built a range of collaborative partnerships with whom we develop insights, learning and evidence to guide the development and delivery of programmes and platforms that will empower our sector leaders to have impact

... we have a reputation as a leading creator and curator of progressive, inclusive, impactful models of leadership

... we see a new narrative emerge that prioritises investment in and support for senior leaders' development, particularly among boards of trustees and funders

We will know we have been successful in the delivery of our strategy when ...

... feedback from our members continues to tell us of the unique value to them of our offer of connectedness and community with their peers

... we continue to offer one to one, specialist support, when needed and in the most effective ways

... we have developed resources and interventions that enable support to be given in new ways beyond one to one interactions

... we see fewer members needing crisis support because they have been able to access effective preventative support

We will know we have been successful in the delivery of our strategy when ...

... we have helped build a healthy, honest and effective relationship between civil society and government

... we have continued to build on existing collaborations and developed new ones that work together in the interests of the sector

... we begin to see meaningful and sustained shifts in key indicators from our annual pay & equalities survey, including signs of improving diversity at the most senior level and greater adherence to best practice in support and development for CEOs

... we have contributed to the work of key partners, including the Association of Chairs, in developing a higher quality of governance across the sector, and seen evidence of this through a positive impact on our CEO in crisis and governance support services

We will know we have been successful in the delivery of our strategy when ...

... we have clear strategies in place for membership, income generation, communications and engagement, the use of data and the development and learning of our team – and we are seeing the benefits of implementing them

... we have a well thought out plan for developing the workforce we need within the resources we have, and are seeing the benefit of that for our members

... we have sustained all that is good and cherished in our internal culture while building our impact, and found the space and capacity to be innovative and creative in our work for members and for the sector

A note on timescales

We have deliberately not set our new strategy to a fixed point of delivery.

Throughout the process of development we have been thinking of this as a 'jagged edge' strategy; one in which individual objectives and delivery plans will need their own horizon points.

Some objectives may be achieved within one or two years; others may take a decade (or more).

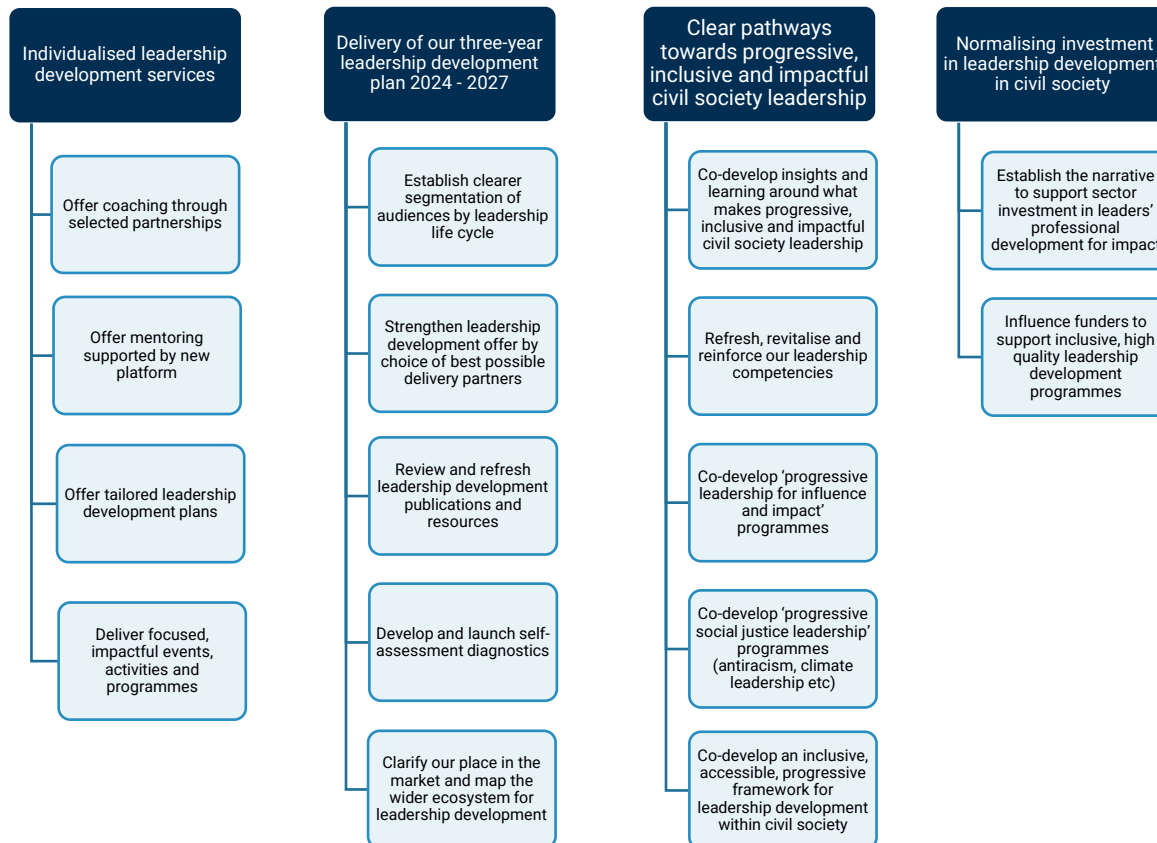
Each year our business planning process will identify the achievable and aspiration priorities for the year, and our board will monitor overall progress towards our strategic objectives.

Full strategic review points will be built in at three yearly intervals, or sooner if necessary in the ever-changing context of our work.

Appendix: the detail

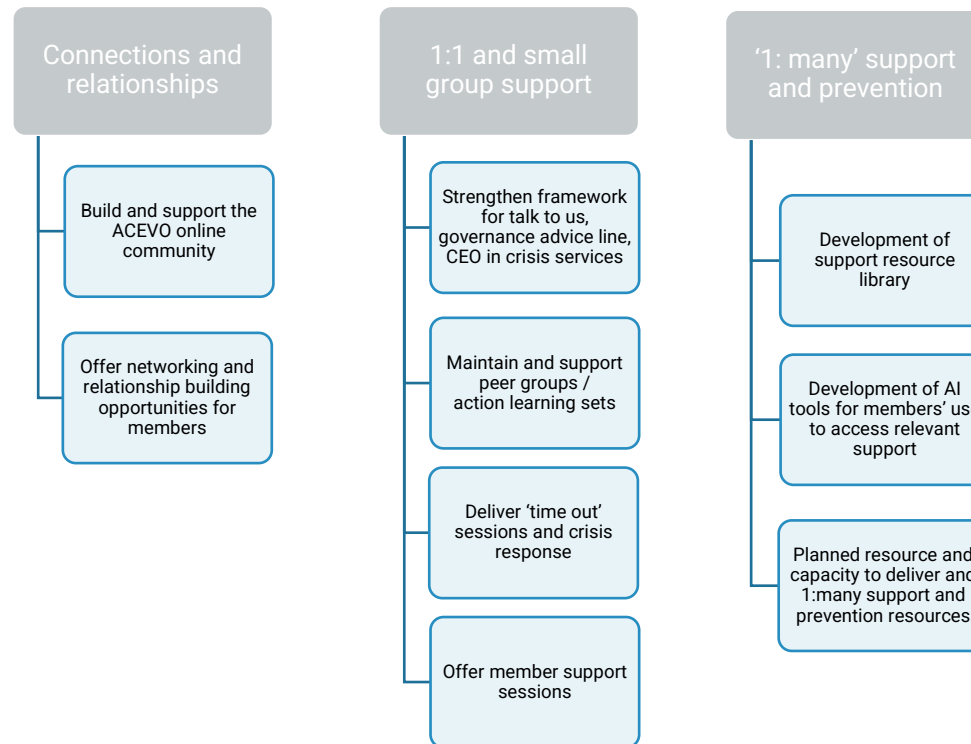
Inspired, impactful, progressive civil society leaders:

Objective: to co-develop models, pathways, programmes and platforms which support progressive, inclusive, impactful leadership



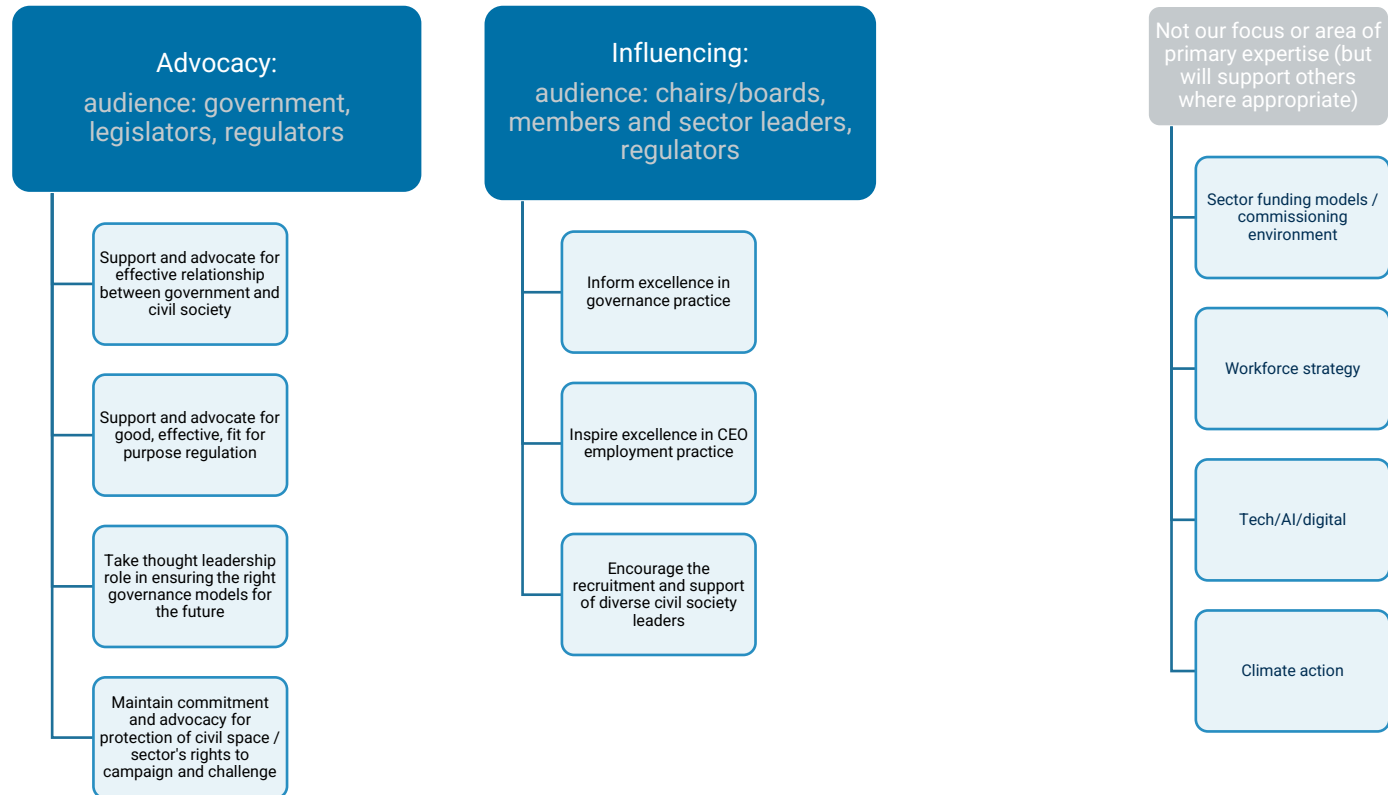
Effectively supported civil society leaders

Objective: to provide responsive, relevant support that helps civil society leaders to thrive and work at their best



An enabling environment for civil society leaders:

Objective: to ensure that civil society leaders have the political, regulatory and governance environments that will enable them to operate with maximum impact



Our own strength, resilience and stability

Objective: to ensure we can continue to deliver our mission sustainably and with impact now and in the future

