

**Our strategy
2023-2027**

**DIVERSE, VIBRANT
AND EFFECTIVE
FOUNDATIONS,
WORKING TOGETHER
FOR SOCIAL GOOD**



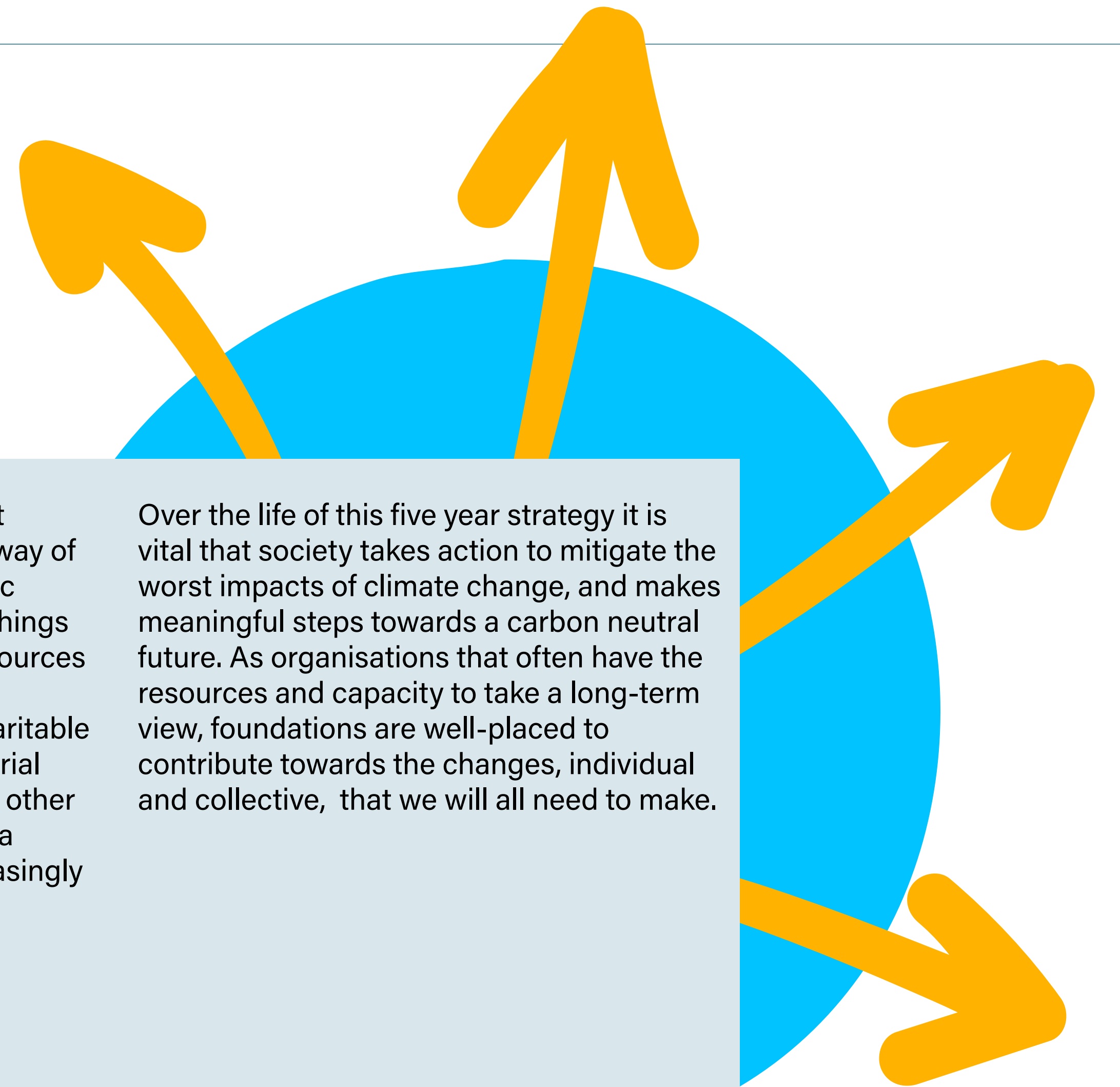
THE VITAL CONTRIBUTION OF FOUNDATIONS

At this time of acute social and economic challenge, when inequalities in our society, and the impact of climate crisis are increasingly evident, foundations have a vital role to play in identifying and responding to need, and using their resources wisely to make the biggest difference possible. In doing this, they can contribute to a stronger and more sustainable civil society, especially when working collaboratively.

At their best foundations are the most transparent, intentional and efficient way of transforming private wealth into public benefit. They embody the belief that things can be better; mobilising funding, resources and expertise to support people, communities, and a wide range of charitable causes. Increasingly the fourth industrial revolution¹ is placing foundations, like other institutions, under greater scrutiny in a context where public opinion is increasingly polarised and truth contested.

Over the life of this five year strategy it is vital that society takes action to mitigate the worst impacts of climate change, and makes meaningful steps towards a carbon neutral future. As organisations that often have the resources and capacity to take a long-term view, foundations are well-placed to contribute towards the changes, individual and collective, that we will all need to make.

¹The fourth industrial revolution includes digital technology, artificial intelligence, cyberphysical technologies etc



CHALLENGES FOR OUR SECTOR

In developing this strategy we have listened to our members, to civil society organisations and the infrastructure bodies that represent them, funders more broadly and ACF's peers. We heard that the key challenges for foundations are:

Addressing inequalities, the cost of living crisis and the ongoing impact of the pandemic

Responding to the climate crisis

Diversity, equity and inclusion

Grant-making and investment practice

And during the period of the strategy review the impact of the cost of living crisis, inflation and possible recession has become more acute.

We recognise the power that we have as a membership association in supporting our members to collectively rise to these challenges and our strategy will provide the framework for us to do this.



THE UNIQUE ROLE OF ACF

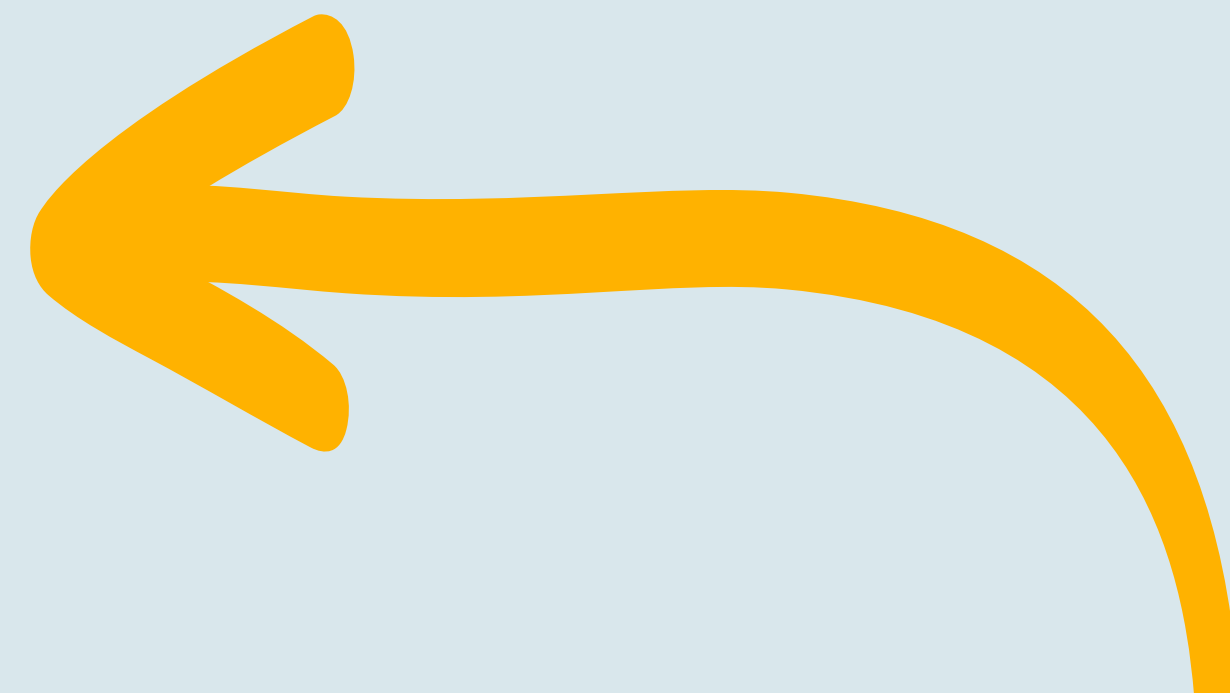
ACF is the leading membership association for foundations and independent grant-makers in the UK. Our strategy is focused on our role as a membership association and how we can effect positive change with and for our members.

440

MEMBERS

We have 440 members who together hold one third of the assets of the charity sector and make over 40 per cent of the grants given by UK foundations. Together they cover the full range of foundations, from small to large and operating in many different fields of grant-making, including social change, the environment, research, education, across the UK and overseas.

Our work builds common understanding of the role of foundations, including with government, and enables our members to be more than the sum of their parts, collaborate and develop their practice, navigating complexity in the challenges they face.



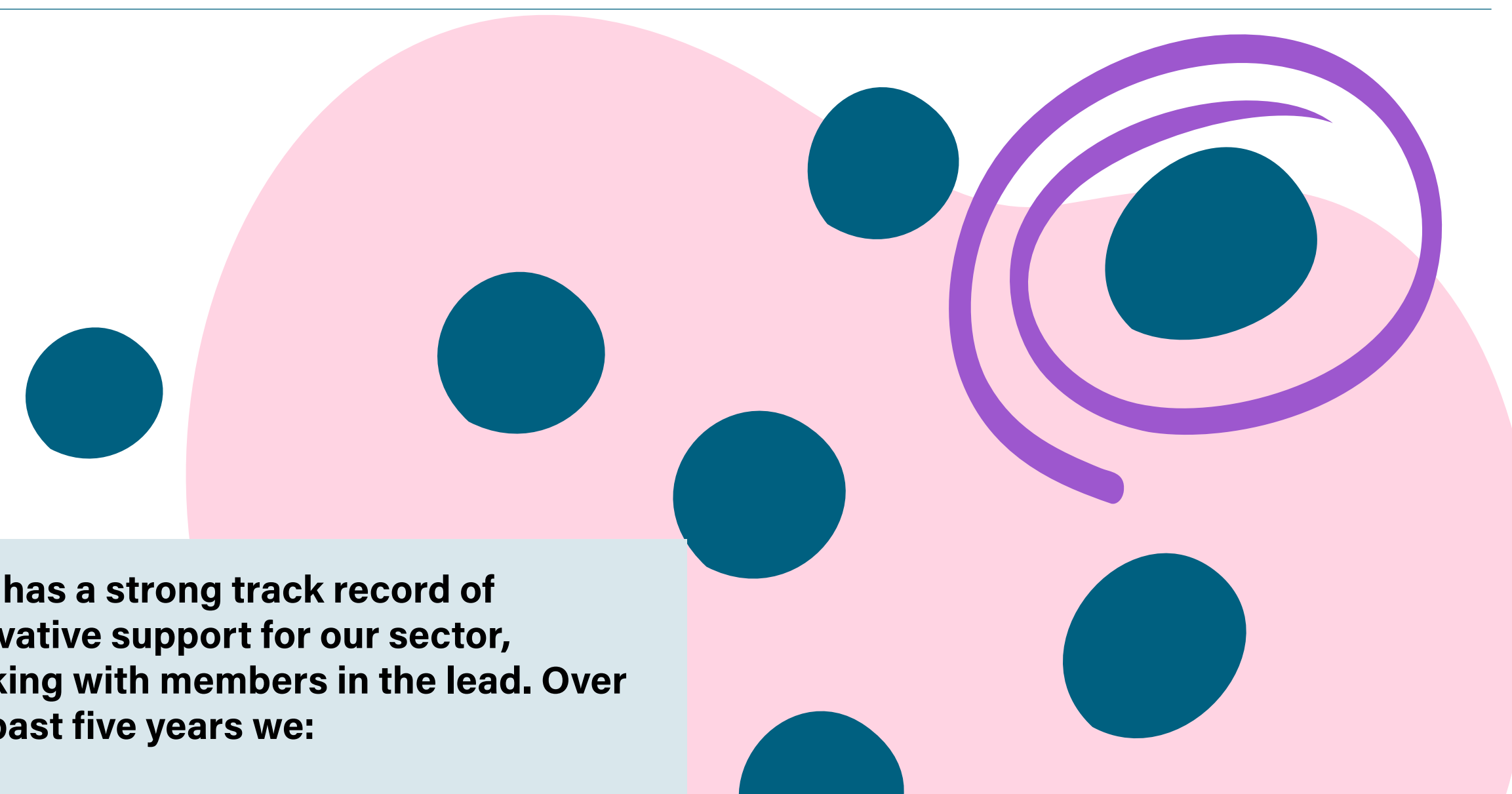
ACF has a strong track record of innovative support for our sector, working with members in the lead. Over the past five years we:

Supported foundations to co-ordinate their work in the response to the pandemic, through our issue-based networks, setting up a Covid-19 resources hub, and in convening opportunities for foundations to share insights on their individual responses

Defined ambitious and effective practice with and for our members, through our Stronger Foundations initiative

Launched the Funder Commitment on Climate Change² and the Funders Collaborative Hub

²The UK Funder Commitment on Climate Change was conceived by ACF's Foundations for Social Justice network, developed by Nick Perks, and formally launched at ACF's annual conference in 2019



THE UNIQUE ROLE OF ACF

We are part of a thriving charitable funding ecosystem in the UK and internationally, that supports innovation and good practice in foundations and in philanthropy more broadly.

In developing our strategy we have taken expert advice to support us in bringing a diversity, equity and inclusion lens³ to our work.

We have taken this lens to our work because it is the right thing to do, and because it will help ACF to be more impactful. The existence of racism and other discriminatory and harmful practices limits ACF's ability to forward our mission and to support foundations to reach their full potential. And there is a strong business case, with a wealth of evidence from the corporate world, showing that including diverse perspectives and experiences is critical for organisations to succeed in what they do.

We also recognise that ACF is on a journey to improve its own practice in this important area. We have made a start, but we have a long way to go, and our strategy will provide the framework for us to make meaningful progress — including a new strategic objective focused specifically on advancing diversity, equity and inclusion for our sector and for ACF. In delivering this objective we will focus on things that we can own, drive and measure rather than broad more sweeping aims and recognising that our own internal development is central to this, not separate.

“WE HAVE TAKEN THIS LENS TO OUR WORK BECAUSE IT IS THE RIGHT THING TO DO, AND BECAUSE IT WILL HELP ACF TO BE MORE IMPACTFUL.”

³For more detail on how we are using these terms, please see page 9.



VISION

Diverse, vibrant, and effective foundations, working together for social good



PURPOSE

We strengthen trusts and foundations so they can rise to the challenges of our times



VALUES

- We care
- We are open
- We are evidence-based
- We are ambitious



OBJECTIVES

Support foundations to aspire to and achieve excellent practice

Curate inspiring, practical and accessible learning and support

Be the 'go to' place for advice and information tailored to foundations

Share practical tools and resources to enable and empower Stronger Foundations⁴

⁴Stronger Foundations is a flagship ACF member-led initiative to help charitable foundations identify and pursue excellent practice.

Advance diversity, equity and inclusion for our sector and for ACF

Build and sustain a diverse and inclusive membership

Champion and celebrate practice which addresses systemic inequities

Gather and share data to deepen our understanding of barriers to, and support progress towards, diversity, equity and inclusion

Strengthen connections across and beyond the sector

Catalyse collaborations between foundations and with others to achieve greater impact

Cultivate vibrant communities of practice and build brave spaces to share knowledge and ideas

Seize and create opportunities to connect with partners to advance our common goals

Sustain a landscape where foundations can continue to thrive

Represent foundations and amplify their voices to influence policy and ensure a supportive legal and regulatory framework in the UK

Share evidence and stories that demonstrate the positive impact of foundations

Support the growth of the sector, including by advocating for the foundation model of philanthropy and the evolution of the sector

CRITICAL SUCCESS FACTORS TO ACHIEVE THESE GOALS

Ensure a compelling membership offer

Ensure our membership offer represents value for foundations, regardless of size, area of interest, and location in the UK

Grow and strengthen our membership community

Elevate our offer through strategic commercial relationships that diversify our income and give members access to knowledge, skills and information

Develop ACF so that we are well-networked across the organisation⁵

Map the charitable giving ecosystem of which we are a part and understand our role in it as a membership body and the power and platforms that gives us

Be clear about where ACF and its partners can add value, amplify innovation and incubate initiatives to have maximum impact

Expose ourselves and our members to different ideas, voices and approaches

Ensure ACF has the capacity, knowledge and skills to deliver this strategy

Identify and build the capacity, knowledge and skills necessary to deliver this strategy, including business development, commissioning and managing research, developing networks, digital and data

Deepen our knowledge of our members and foundation practice

Strengthen our digital services, platforms and journeys, enhancing our support and the insights that we can gain and share

Culture and approach

Build an inclusive and learning culture amongst staff and trustees

Be proactive and disciplined in the pursuit of our goals and foster creativity and flexibility in how we achieve them

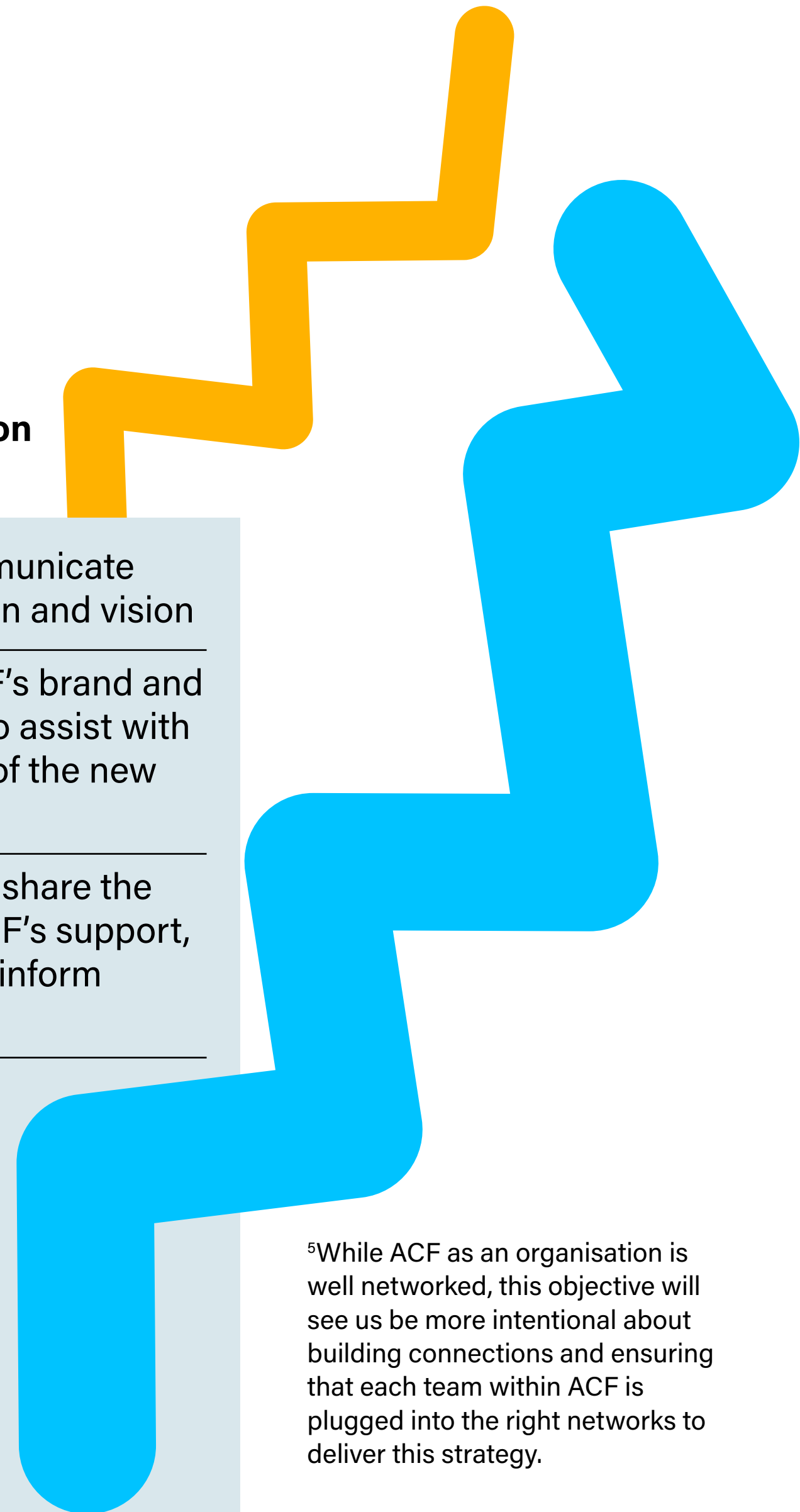
Ensure ACF is a great place to work, where colleagues are trusted, celebrated, and belong

Communication and impact

Clearly communicate ACF's mission and vision

Develop ACF's brand and messaging to assist with the delivery of the new strategy

Capture and share the impact of ACF's support, using this to inform decisions



⁵While ACF as an organisation is well networked, this objective will see us be more intentional about building connections and ensuring that each team within ACF is plugged into the right networks to deliver this strategy.

WHAT WE MEAN BY DIVERSITY, EQUITY AND INCLUSION

The below definitions are based on the work of the D5 Coalition, a five year initiative in the US to advance philanthropy's approach to diversity, equity, and inclusion (adapted from Grantcraft [2018] *From Words to Action: A practical philanthropic guide to diversity, equity and inclusion*)

We define **diversity** broadly to include various elements of human difference, including race and ethnicity, sexual orientation, disability, gender, faith and class. We also recognise the intersectional nature of identity and the complex and cumulative ways that different forms of discrimination based on these attributes combine, overlap and intersect.

Equity involves the promotion of justice and equality of opportunity and outcomes within the procedures, processes and distribution of resources by institutions or systems. Tackling inequity requires an understanding of the underlying or root causes of disparities, both at the point of access and in terms of outcomes, within our society.

Inclusion refers to the degree to which diverse individuals are able to participate fully in all aspects of activity, including decision-making. While a truly 'inclusive' group is necessarily diverse, a 'diverse' group may or may not be 'inclusive'.





Association of Charitable Foundations

Toynbee Hall
28 Commercial Street
London E1 6LS

Registered charity number: 1105412
Company registration number: 5190466

Contact us:

www.acf.org.uk
acf@acf.org.uk

