

Irish Association for Counselling and Psychotherapy

Strategic Plan 2026 - 2030



@iacp

Irish Association for Counselling and Psychotherapy

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On behalf of the Board and the Executive of the IACP, we are pleased to introduce our **Strategic Plan 2026 - 2030**, which sets out a clear and confident direction for the organisation and the professions over the coming years.

This plan is launching at a defining moment for the counselling and psychotherapy professions in Ireland – one shaped by rising demand for mental health support, evolving public expectations, and the significant transition toward statutory regulation under CORU.

Foreword from the Cathaoirleach and Chief Executive Officer

As Ireland's largest professional body for counsellors and psychotherapists, the IACP occupies a central and influential position within the therapeutic sector. Our strength lies in our membership – with more than 7,000 members working across private practice, community settings, health services, education, and voluntary organisations across the island. Supported by our national office team and guided by a dedicated volunteer Board, the IACP is a member-led organisation in the truest sense. The expertise, insight, and contribution of our members continue to shape both the organisation and the wider professions.

This strategy matters now because the landscape in which we practice is changing rapidly. The transition to state regulation represents both a challenge and an exciting opportunity. It calls upon us to ensure that standards remain robust, that practitioners are supported, and that the profession's voice is clearly heard in shaping the frameworks that will define its future. Our role in this moment is clear: to provide leadership, clarity, and confidence to our members, while positioning counselling and psychotherapy as essential to Ireland's mental health and primary care systems.

Our strategic plan focuses on preparation, positioning, and strength. It is grounded in fortifying the foundations that will enable both our organisation and the professions to thrive. Central to this are three interconnected strategic pillars.

1. Strengthening Member Value and Professional Community ensures that practitioners are supported, connected, and equipped to flourish. We are committed to building professional capacity, maintaining high standards in accreditation, supervision, ethics, and continuing professional development, and fostering a strong, engaged professional community.

2. Organisational Capacity to Support Members and the Professions recognises that delivering for our members requires strong internal systems and capabilities. We will invest in responsive member services, robust data systems to inform advocacy, and effective communications that keep members informed and connected.

3. Professional Standing and Organisational Positioning focus on advancing the credibility and influence of both the IACP and the professions. Through engagement with policymakers, collaboration with stakeholders, and advocacy within regulatory processes, we will ensure that the realities of practice are reflected in decision-making and that members' voices are represented where it matters most.

At the heart of this strategy is a commitment to accountability, transparency, and excellence. We have refreshed our mission, vision, and values to reflect the evolving context in which we practice, and we remain steadfast in our purpose: to promote high professional standards, support our members, and improve access to quality counselling and psychotherapy services for the public.

We would like to acknowledge the many members, volunteers, staff, and stakeholders whose insights have shaped this plan. Your contributions have ensured that it is both grounded in real-world experience and focused on practical, achievable progress.

Together, we are shaping the future of our professions. This strategy provides the framework to move forward with clarity, purpose, and collective confidence for the next five years while supporting our members and people seeking care and therapy.


Jade Lawless
Cathaoirleach


Lisa Molloy
Chief Executive Officer

About the IACP

The IACP is Ireland's largest professional body for counsellors and psychotherapists and plays a central role in the sector. IACP is a member led organisation, governed by a volunteer Board and supported by an executive team, with many members also involved through committees, working groups, and regional or thematic networks.

The IACP has more than 7,000 members across Ireland, representing counsellors and psychotherapists in private practice, community settings, health services, education, and voluntary organisations. Our members work with diverse populations and practice across a wide range of therapeutic modalities. In practical terms, this means delivering continuing professional development, providing regulatory guidance and support, engaging with policymakers and health services, upholding professional standards, and connecting practitioners through regional networks and special interest groups.

The IACP is here to:



Vision

To see professional counselling and psychotherapy as an integral part of healthcare, allowing people in need to achieve greater well-being through regulated, high-quality services.

Mission

To identify, develop, and maintain standards of excellence in counselling and psychotherapy through education, training, and accreditation, protecting the public by promoting best practice and member development.

Values

These underlying values guide our work:

- Act with integrity and work professionally and ethically
- Encourage and embrace equality, diversity, and inclusion
- Value the IACP community
- Set high standards for the organisation and our members
- Operate in a trustworthy, respectful, and transparent manner
- Commitment to excellence in our work

Board of Directors

as of June 2026

We are governed by an experienced Board of Directors, all of whom are volunteers, and come with substantial experience in counselling and psychotherapy and the sector. Our Board includes members with diverse professional backgrounds spanning counselling and psychotherapy practice, training, research, and sector leadership. This gives them a unique insight into the work

of IACP and allows them to provide strategic oversight and direction to the organisation and our members. The Board is committed to exemplary governance and integrity, ensuring IACP operates transparently and accountably in service of members and the public.

Jade Lawless
Cathaoirleach



Christopher Place
Leas Cathaoirleach



Brian Holohan
Company Secretary



Edward Boyne
Treasurer



Marcella Finnerty
Board Member



John Cummins
Board Member (Extern)



Gael Kilduff
Board Member



Liam Neville
Board Member

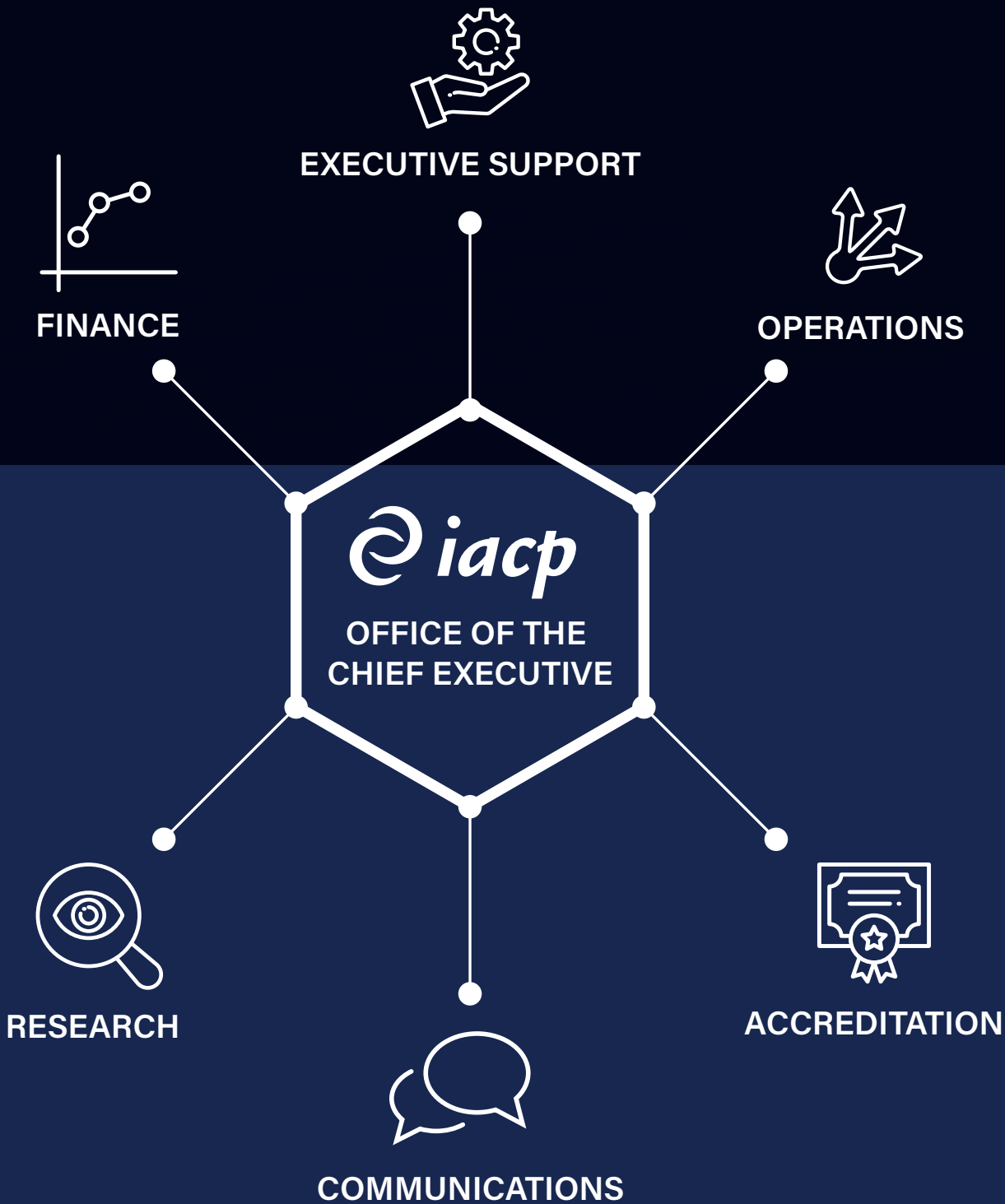


Clodagh Ní Ghallachóir
Board Member



Executive Team

Our committed and multi-skilled team comprises:



Member and Volunteer Involvement

The work we do at the IACP would not be possible without the commitment and expertise of our members who volunteer their time, knowledge, and professional insight to advance the professions. Member volunteers are the backbone of our professional community, bringing lived experience, clinical expertise, and strategic guidance that shapes everything we do, from standards development and peer mentorship to policy engagement and community leadership.

Member involvement is a core principle for the IACP, and we recognise the immense value that practitioners bring through their contributions. We recognise that our members manage demanding professional responsibilities, often as sole practitioners, and we seek to create contribution opportunities that are purposeful, well-scoped, and mutually beneficial.

- This includes:**
- Reviewing how members contribute, ensuring roles and opportunities are clearly scoped, purposeful, and aligned with strategic priorities.
 - Gathering insight from members who are involved, so we can strengthen the supports that enable effective and sustainable engagement.
 - Making the value exchange more visible, highlighting how member expertise shapes the professions while involvement supports professional development and profile.
 - Strengthening the organisational supports that enable member involvement structures to work effectively and set members up for success.

Through this work, we are strengthening an environment in which members who volunteer their time experience their involvement as purposeful and impactful in advancing the IACP’s mission. Committee structures operate with clear mandates, defined scopes, and aligned accountability, enabling focused and effective contributions. Members are supported to engage in ways that complement their practice and professional commitments. In turn, the professions is strengthened through member expertise shaping our standards, ethics, professional development and strategic direction.

What We’ve Learned

- Members are busy professionals, many working as sole practitioners, with limited time
- Current committee structures may not be sustainable or strategically aligned
- The value exchange for volunteer involvement needs to be clearer

Our Intention

- Create clearly scoped, time-limited opportunities
- Align involvement with member expertise and strategic priorities
- Ensure contributions enhance both the professions and members own professional development

Strengthening Member Involvement
Members have consistently highlighted the importance of involvement in shaping the professions and strengthening the organisation. We recognise and deeply value the time, expertise and commitment that members already contribute across committees, working groups, and voluntary roles. This contribution is central to our work and to the continued development of the professions.

Building on what we have heard through ongoing engagement, our focus is on continuously improving how member involvement works in practice so that it remains meaningful, well-supported and clearly connected to our strategic priorities.



Strategic Plan

This Strategic Plan has been shaped through a comprehensive and inclusive process centred on member voice, professional expertise, and stakeholder insight. Over several months, we engaged widely through surveys, workshops, interviews, and data analysis to ensure the strategy reflects the realities and aspirations of those connected to the IACP.

To guide the process, a dedicated Strategy and Insights Committee provided governance, reviewed findings, and ensured alignment with organisational priorities and sector context. This governance structure enabled us to stay grounded while exploring opportunities for growth and improvement.

Our consultation reached across the organisation, from Board members, committees, and staff to members and external partners including policy makers, educators, and regulatory bodies. These conversations focused on understanding what is working well, identifying areas for development, and exploring future directions in counselling and psychotherapy.

All input was carefully analysed to uncover key themes and strategic priorities. This insight helped us refresh our mission,

vision, and values, and shape a strategic framework that translates aspirations into clear priorities and actions.

The resulting Strategic Plan is structured around three interconnected Objectives that balance internal capacity, member engagement, and external impact. A consistent theme was the importance of preparation and positioning during a period of regulatory and sectoral change, rather than pursuing transformational shifts.

Attention was given to enhancing member involvement, recognising the vital contribution members make and the need to ensure structures are meaningful, sustainable, and aligned with our strategic goals. Organisational capacity also emerged as a foundational Objective, essential to delivering effective services and advocacy.

By engaging openly with those who know the IACP best and those who influence our sector, we have developed a focused, realistic, and responsive plan. This Strategy sets a clear direction for the next five years, building on strengths, addressing challenges, and positioning counselling and psychotherapy as a key part of Ireland’s mental health landscape.

The Strategic Pillars

Pillar 01

Strengthen Member Value and Professional Community

Ensuring practitioners have the support, development, opportunities, and genuine connection they need to flourish during regulatory transition and beyond.

This means:

- Building professional capacity.
- Creating pathways that maintain excellence while ensuring Ireland has the practitioners it needs.
- Protecting the public, supporting members.
- Championing standards for accreditation, supervision, ethics, and CPD, that work for clients, agencies, and practitioners alike.

Pillar 02

Organisational Capacity to Support Members and the Professions

Fostering the infrastructure, systems, and team capabilities that make us responsive, effective, and sustainable.

This means:

- Member services that respond quickly and knowledgeably to your questions.
- Data systems that track workforce trends and inform our advocacy.
- Communications that keep you informed and connected.

Pillar 03

Professional Standing and Organisational Positioning

Advancing our credibility and influence through strategic initiatives, policy engagement, and collaborative partnerships that position counselling and psychotherapy as essential to Ireland’s mental health landscape.

This means:

- Influencing regulation.
- Advocating for frameworks that protect the public and reflect how counselling and psychotherapy happens.
- Making your voice heard.
- Taking your perspectives directly to the tables where decisions are made.

Strategic Planning Process



- 01 Kick off**
- Established Strategy Committee to provide governance, oversight, and strategic guidance throughout the process.
 - Conducted desk analysis including review of strategic documents, governance structures, membership data, financial trends, and sector comparators.



- 02 Consultation**
- Engaged with Board members, committees, staff, and members through surveys, workshops, and structured consultations.
 - Conducted interviews with key external stakeholders.



- 03 Data Collection and Analysis**
- All consultation inputs analysed and synthesised to identify emerging themes, strategic opportunities, and priority areas for the organisation.



- 04 Visioning and Prioritisation**
- Refreshed mission, vision, and values based on stakeholder input to ensure they are relevant and responsive for this strategic cycle and the changing regulatory landscape.
 - Key focus areas prioritised in alignment with organisational strengths, emerging opportunities, and stakeholder needs.
 - Strategic framework developed to translate vision into priorities, goals, and strategic actions.



- 05 Development**
- Translated strategic framework into actionable initiatives with clear responsibilities and timelines.
 - Established implementation and monitoring approach to support delivery and measure impact Presented draft framework to Board for review and feedback.



- 06 Launch**
- Board endorsed the Strategic Plan Established implementation and reporting framework to support strategic delivery Developed approach for communicating the strategy to members and stakeholders.

Strategic Pillars

Through our strategic planning process, we identified three core strategic objectives that will guide and shape our work over the lifetime of this Strategy.

These core strategic objectives reflect our commitment to strengthening member value, building organisational capacity, and advancing the professional standing of counselling and psychotherapy in Ireland.

Strategic Pillar 01

Strategic Intent:



Member Value and Professional Community

To ensure every member experiences clear, tangible value from their membership and feels part of a connected, respected and professionally supported community.

1.1 Member Support and Value Proposition	Expected Outcomes
We will strengthen our support systems and clearly articulate the value of membership at every career stage. This includes ensuring members have access to reliable regulatory information, professional resources and responsive support services. We will prioritise transparent communication about the benefits of membership and how resources are invested to support practitioners and the professions.	• Members actively engage with and articulate the value of their IACP membership. • Retention rates hold firm across all career stages. • Early career practitioners access the support they need to become established in the professions. • Overall membership grows steadily year on year.
1.2 Professional Community Infrastructure	Expected Outcomes
We will foster meaningful professional connection by strengthening peer networks, community groups and collaborative initiatives. We will support digital and in-person engagement opportunities that enhance belonging, shared learning and referral pathways. We will encourage member-led initiatives and create inclusive spaces that reflect the diversity of the professions.	• Participation in peer networks and community groups grows measurably. • Member-led initiatives increase in number and diversity. • Digital and in-person engagement levels rise year on year. • Members report a stronger sense of professional identity and belonging.
1.3 High Quality Professional Development	Expected Outcomes
We will provide high-quality, relevant CPD opportunities that respond to evolving practice needs and emerging areas of expertise. Our focus will be on practical learning that enhances competence, confidence and professional standards. We will continue to position IACP as a leading provider of professional development within the counselling and psychotherapy field.	• Practitioners apply CPD learning directly to their practice, improving client outcomes. • CPD uptake and satisfaction rates increase across the membership. • IACP is recognised as the leading professional development provider in the field.

Strategic Pillar 02

Strategic Intent:



Organisational Capacity to Support Members and the Professions

To build a strong, sustainable and effective organisation that is equipped to support members and respond confidently to change.

2.1 Strengthening Digital and Operational Foundations	Expected Outcomes
We will modernise our digital platforms and operational systems to ensure efficient, accessible and member-centred services. By investing in technology and streamlining processes, we will enhance the overall member experience and enable staff to focus on high-value support and engagement.	• Members experience seamless, responsive digital interactions with IACP. • Staff capacity is redirected toward high-value member support and engagement. • Operational efficiency improves measurably across key service areas.
2.2 Financial Transparency and Resilience	Expected Outcomes
We are committed to transparent financial stewardship and will explore opportunities to diversify revenue streams where appropriate, strengthening our financial resilience and long-term sustainability. We will clearly communicate how membership income supports services, advocacy and professional development.	• Members have clear sight of how their membership income is invested. • Revenue diversification reduces dependence on any single income stream. • IACP maintains the financial stability needed to invest strategically in the professions.
2.3 Organisational Effectiveness, Governance and Capacity	Expected Outcomes
We will maintain strong governance structures that provide strategic oversight and accountability. This includes ongoing review of board and committee effectiveness, clear decision-making processes and alignment of resources with strategic priorities. We will support staff and volunteers through professional development, clear policies and sustainable engagement structures, ensuring their contribution is meaningful and aligned with organisational goals.	• Governance structures are reviewed regularly and operate with clarity and accountability. • Staff and volunteers are equipped, supported and empowered in their roles. • Resources are consistently aligned to strategic priorities and deliver high-impact work.

Strategic Pillar 03

Strategic Intent:



Professional Standing and Organisational Positioning

To strengthen professional recognition, influence policy development and ensure members are supported through regulatory change.

3.1 Strengthening Accreditation & Professional Recognition	Expected Outcomes
We will ensure that our accreditation framework remains robust, credible and aligned with recognised national and international standards. Through review, benchmarking and stakeholder engagement, we will strengthen recognition of IACP accreditation across employment, health and education sectors.	• IACP accreditation is recognised as a trusted quality standard across employment, health and education sectors. • Members' professional opportunities expand as accreditation gains wider acceptance. • Counselling and psychotherapy become more fully integrated within Ireland's healthcare system.
3.2 Building IACP's Voice and Influence	Expected Outcomes
We will strengthen our role as an evidence-informed and credible representative voice for the professions. By engaging proactively in policy discussions, consultations and sector forums, we will ensure practitioner perspectives are reflected in professional and regulatory developments. We will build strategic relationships with policymakers, health service leaders and sector stakeholders to enhance the visibility and influence of the professions.	• IACP is consistently sought out as a key stakeholder in policy and regulatory discussions. • Practitioner perspectives are reflected in legislative and sector-level decisions. • Strategic relationships with policymakers and health leaders deepen year on year.
3.3 Supporting Members and Training Providers Through Statutory Registration	Expected Outcomes
We will actively engage with CORU and support members and IACP accredited courses throughout the transition to statutory registration. Our focus will be on clear communication, practical guidance and strong advocacy during this significant period of professional change.	• Members and accredited training courses are well-informed at every stage of the CORU registration process. • IACP's advocacy results in a transition process that is fair and workable for practitioners and courses. • Member confidence in IACP's leadership through regulatory change is high.

Implementation and Delivery

We'll implement our three strategic objectives through careful phased delivery from 2026 to 2030. Our approach is grounded in five implementation principles.



01 Member Voice First

We engage members in co-designing services and making decisions that affect them.



02 Build for Scale

We invest in staff and infrastructure (digital, operational, governance) that can grow with the professions.



03 Partner Strategically

We cultivate relationships that multiply our impact and create opportunities for members.



04 Financial Sustainability

We will explore diversifying income streams to invest in services.



05 Learn and Adapt

We pilot initiatives, gather feedback, refine based on learning, and scale what works.

Why This Strategy Matters Now

The landscape is shifting. Demand for mental health support is rising, public expectations are evolving, and statutory regulation through CORU is changing how we practice. This is a **defining moment for our professions.**

The IACP is positioned right at the centre of this transformation, connecting you with policymakers, shaping regulatory conversations, and ensuring the professions' future reflects the realities of contemporary practice.

The coming years represent a period of significant change for Ireland's counselling and psychotherapy profession driven by statutory regulation. IACP's purpose during this transition is to support members with clear information, consistent standards, and strong representation, while strengthening the foundations that will enable the professions to thrive.

This strategic framework focuses on preparation and positioning, advancing credibility, developing robust organisational capacity, and establishing collaborative partnerships that create the conditions for powerful advocacy and growth.

Key Initiatives

To deliver on our three strategic objectives, we will implement several major initiatives across the roadmap period.



Member App

We will develop a mobile and web app to provide members with easier access to their IACP account, CPD tracking, resources, and member support. The app aims to improve member experience and strengthen engagement with IACP throughout the year.



Digital Enhancement

We will enhance our digital infrastructure including our website, member database, and communications systems to improve member experience, operational efficiency, and our capacity to gather insights that inform advocacy.



Member Regulation Support & Engagement with CORU

We will provide support and resources for members navigating statutory registration while actively engaging with CORU to represent member perspectives and ensure registration frameworks are informed by practical realities.



Policy Engagement and Advocacy

We will maintain active policy engagement -making submissions, participating in consultations, and representing member perspectives in forums where decisions about the professions are made.



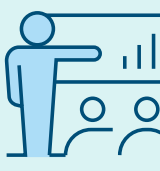
Partnership Development

We will strengthen relationships with allied organisations, educational institutions, health services, and international bodies to amplify the IACP's voice and create opportunities for the professions and members.



Volunteer Engagement Review

We will review how members engage as volunteers-including committee structures and regional involvement-to nsure volunteer opportunities are meaningful, sustainable, and well-supported.



CPD Enhancement and Expansion

We will work to expand and enhance our CPD offerings, exploring accessible formats, diverse topics, and delivery methods that respond to member feedback and emerging practice needs.

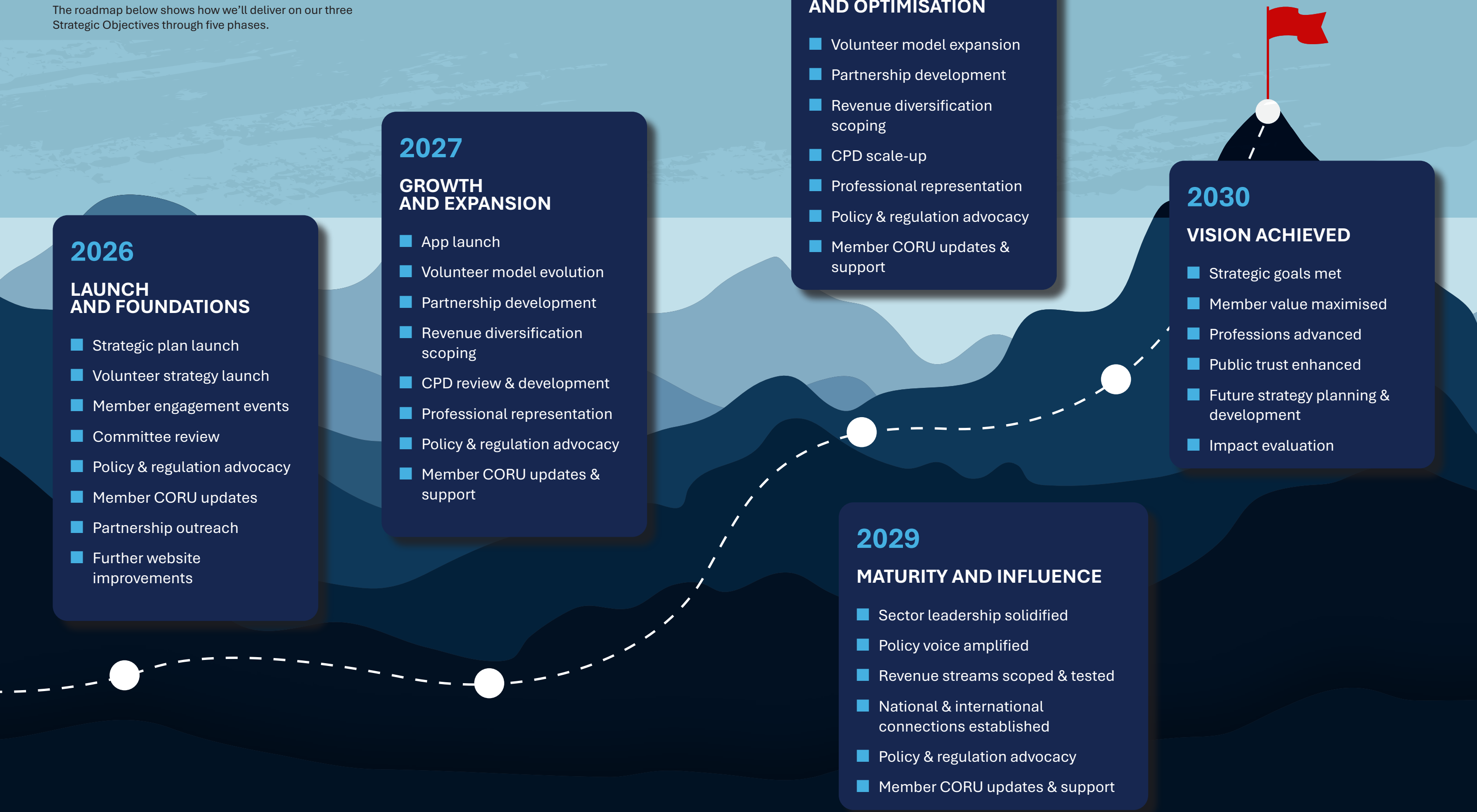


Revenue Diversification Exploration

To support long-term sustainability, we will explore potential additional revenue sources that could complement membership income, such as sponsorships, grants, or training partnerships.

Leading Irish Counselling and Psychotherapy into a New Era

The roadmap below shows how we'll deliver on our three Strategic Objectives through five phases.



2026 LAUNCH AND FOUNDATIONS

- Strategic plan launch
- Volunteer strategy launch
- Member engagement events
- Committee review
- Policy & regulation advocacy
- Member CORU updates
- Partnership outreach
- Further website improvements

2027 GROWTH AND EXPANSION

- App launch
- Volunteer model evolution
- Partnership development
- Revenue diversification scoping
- CPD review & development
- Professional representation
- Policy & regulation advocacy
- Member CORU updates & support

2028 CONSOLIDATION AND OPTIMISATION

- Volunteer model expansion
- Partnership development
- Revenue diversification scoping
- CPD scale-up
- Professional representation
- Policy & regulation advocacy
- Member CORU updates & support

2029 MATURITY AND INFLUENCE

- Sector leadership solidified
- Policy voice amplified
- Revenue streams scoped & tested
- National & international connections established
- Policy & regulation advocacy
- Member CORU updates & support

2030 VISION ACHIEVED

- Strategic goals met
- Member value maximised
- Professions advanced
- Public trust enhanced
- Future strategy planning & development
- Impact evaluation

Our Commitment

The IACP is strongly committed to delivering on the strategic priorities outlined in this plan and advancing the professions of counselling and psychotherapy in Ireland.

Building on decades of advocacy and professional support, we are positioned to strengthen member value, deepen partnerships across the mental health sector, and adapt our services to meet the changing landscape of regulation, practice, and public need.

This strategic plan focuses our collective efforts, strengthens our professional identity, and ensures that everything we do is aligned to achieving meaningful and sustainable outcomes for our members and the people they support.

Accountability and Progress

We recognise that a strategic plan is only as strong as its implementation. Accountability and transparency will be supported by four key commitments:



Annual Progress Reviews

The Board will review progress against strategic priorities, with updates shared with members.



Clear Communication

Members will be updated on strategic initiatives, milestones achieved, and work in progress at the annual general meetings.



Member Feedback

We will seek member input on how well we are delivering on our commitments.



Adaptation When Needed

While our strategic objectives provide strategic direction, we will remain responsive to emerging needs and opportunities.

Commitment to Equality, Diversity and Inclusion and Research Excellence

Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) and Research excellence function as core enablers of the organisation’s strategic pillars and objectives, ensuring that delivery is both impactful and sustainable.



Embedding EDI principles across all areas of activity strengthens governance and decision-making, broadens participation and fosters a culture in which diverse perspectives inform innovation and collaboration.



In parallel, a **robust Research ecosystem** underpins evidence-informed practice, supports continuous improvement, and enhances the organisation’s capacity to respond proactively to evolving societal, technological, and sectoral developments.

Together, EDI and research operate as cross-cutting foundations across the strategy, promoting equity of opportunity, reinforcing quality and relevance, and ensuring that progress is guided by rigorous insight, partnership, and shared learning.

Moving Forward Together



This strategy belongs to our entire professional community, our members, volunteers, staff and Board – all working together.

Our member engagement, expertise and feedback will be essential to our success.

We enter this strategic period with confidence, clarity and commitment.

Together, we will navigate regulatory transition, strengthen our professions, and ensure counselling and psychotherapy remain central to Ireland’s mental health landscape.



Irish Association for Counselling and Psychotherapy

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