



International Consortium
for Social Development

Strategic Plan

2026 – 2029

Scholarship · Policy · Practice · Global Community

Our Vision

To be a leading association of international scholars and practitioners devoted to the study and advancement of knowledge and practice about social development.

— ICSD Constitution

This strategic plan translates our enduring mission into focused action for 2026–2029, guided by direct input from our global membership.

ICSD Core Values

- 1 Intersystemic**
Attention to the relations and impact of social systems on each other.
- 2 Intersectoral**
Focuses on political, economic, and cultural dimensions within and between social systems.
- 3 Institutional**
Creates new institutions and supports the renewal of existing ones.
- 4 Normative**
Social, economic, and political justice, peace, and human empowerment frame social development.
- 5 Participatory**
Maximum participation of those people to be affected.

— ICSD Constitution

A globally connected, more diverse ICSD — bridging social development scholarship to policy and practice.

By 2029, ICSD will be...

Globally Diverse

A larger, more globally representative membership with active leadership from the Global South.

Policy-Influential

A recognized voice in UN/ECOSOC and Commission for Social Development processes.

Scholarly Anchor

A stronger SDI journal with an impact factor and wide indexing.

Agile & Accountable

A leaner governance structure with active board members and branches driving implementation.

How This Plan Was Developed

This plan was developed through a structured, member-informed process led by the ICSD Strategic Planning Task Team and endorsed by the President and Board.

1

Two Strategy Sessions

The Board convened two facilitated strategy sessions in early 2026 to surface priorities and shape direction.

2

Three Member Surveys

- (1) Strategy survey (n=33)
- (2) Targeted ICSD–UN engagement survey (7)
- (3) Board governance deep-dive (13 of 24 board members, 54%)

3

Thematic Synthesis

Responses across all three surveys were coded and synthesized; UN engagement findings will inform separate Board guidelines.

4

Drafting & Review

A drafting team translated themes into pillars, goals, and tactics; the draft is circulated to the Task Team and Board for input.

Survey synthesized · Strategy (n=33) · UN engagement (7) · Board governance (n=13) · Reviewed by the Task Team and President

What We Heard

Strengthen SDI Journal

Ranked the #1 priority area: rebuild SDI as an indexed, respected outlet for SD scholarship.

Grow the Membership

The most-cited qualitative theme: recruit and retain a more globally diverse membership base.

Year-Round Scholarship

Beyond conferences, members want regular research exchange — webinars, symposia, author talks.

Sharpen UN Engagement

Members want a focused, evidence-informed UN voice anchored in CSocD and the Doha Declaration.

Optimizing Governance

Members see today's structure as too large for <100 members; they want faster decisions and active branches. Better alignment of structures with strategic goals.

Lower Participation Barriers

Strengthen payment systems, streamline signup processes, and expand access for Global South members.

Governance Deep Dive

BOARD'S RANKED PRIORITIES

- 1 Membership growth & retention
- 2 Streamlining governance processes
- 3 Regional branch development
- 4 Stronger policy voice with the UN
- 5 Financial sustainability

WHAT THE BOARD SAYS IT NEEDS

Optimize board structure & become agile

Smaller working board decisions / Executive Council; task-focused committees with clear reports.

Clarify roles & portfolios

5 of 13 board members find roles unclear; define portfolios and 'members at large' activities.

Accountability for contribution

Set strategic goals per role; inactive board members rotate to regular membership.

Healthier board culture

Respectful engagement scored lowest (mean 3.31); proactively manage negative undercurrents.

Onboarding & SOPs

Governance onboarding for new members; clarify SOPs (elections, nominations, exceptions).

To double membership, the Board prioritized: clearer member value proposition · improved communication · regional drives · fixed admin & payment systems

Strategic Framework

1 Grow & Diversify

A larger, more globally representative membership.

2 Amplify Policy Voice

Stronger presence in UN and international SD policy.

3 Advance Scholarship

A revitalized SDI journal and year-round research exchange.

4 Effective Governance

Right-sized structure, accountable, with active regional branches.

5 Engage Digitally

A modern web presence and active year-round communication.

Each pillar includes goals and tactics aligned with member priorities.

1

*#1 in the Board
governance survey &
top qualitative theme.*

Grow & Diversify Global Membership

GOAL

Build a larger, more globally representative ICSD — especially from the Global South and from outside traditional social work.

SUGGESTED TACTICS

- Sharpen and publish a clearer ICSD value proposition — the Board's #1 named requisite for doubling membership.
- Enhance the membership signup form and payment flow — remove the friction members reported (especially in Africa).
- Offer sliding-scale dues and sponsorship pairings (Global North members underwriting Global South colleagues).
- Charge every board member with personal recruitment targets; treat membership growth as a board-led activity.
- Re-engage former and lapsed members with a targeted win-back campaign.
- Reach beyond social work — recruit from economics, public health, policy, education and development.
- Set a stretch goal of 1,000 members by 2029, tracked by region and career stage.

2

*Ranked #4 in both surveys
— members want a
focused, evidence-
informed voice.*

Amplify Policy Voice & UN Engagement

GOAL

Build a credible, sustained ICSD presence in global social development policy — anchored in the UN Commission for Social Development (CSocD), the NGO CSocD, and the Doha Political Declaration follow-up.

SUGGESTED TACTICS

- Maintain UN ECOSOC consultative status and frame ICSD's voice as evidence-informed — grounded in SDI scholarship and member expertise.
- Designate a UN focal point coordinating with the President, plus thematic representatives selected through an open, transparent process.
- Anchor engagement in the annual CSocD cycle (NYC February session) with year-round preparation and report-outs to the Board and members.
- Formalize joint work with IFSW, IASSW, and ICSW — shared statements, side events, and coordinated advocacy.
- Align SDI articles and ICSD position statements with CSocD themes and Doha Declaration priorities.
- Focus on a small set of themes: poverty, decent work, social protection, inclusion (digital and gender), and care systems.

3

SDI & scholarship: the strategy survey's #1 ranked priority.

Advance Scholarship & the SDI Journal

GOAL

Position SDI as a recognized, indexed, widely read outlet for interdisciplinary SD scholarship and create year-round opportunities for scholarly exchange.

SUGGESTED TACTICS

- Support NMU partnership to build a sustainable open access platform for SDI.
- Prioritize Scopus indexing as the near-term target; pursue Clarivate/impact factor as a longer-term goal.
- Publish issues on a reliable schedule; issue calls for special issues on timely SD topics.
- Incentivize research collaborations between scholars in the Global North and Global South.
- Launch regular digital research session (webinar / author talk / works-in-progress) between biennial conferences.
- Promote articles actively through ICSD channels and social media.
- Develop and implement a financial sustainability plan for the journal.

4

Streamlining governance ranked #2 in the Board governance survey.

Efficient & Effective Governance

GOAL

Streamline ICSD's governance so decisions are faster, accountability is clearer, and regional voices are heard.

SUGGESTED TACTICS

- Delegate authority to a smaller Executive Council, supported by task-focused committees. pursue the constitutional pathway to a future streamlined board.
- Define board portfolio in writing — 5 of 13 board members report roles are unclear.
- Set strategic goals per role, attendance standards, and term limits; inactive board members rotate to regular membership.
- Invest in board culture and conflict resolution — respectful engagement scored lowest (mean 3.31) in the governance survey.
- Clarify standing operating procedures where confusion exists (elections, nominations, exceptions); publish an annual report to members.
- Support active regional branches with small capacity grants and an annual online branch-representatives meeting.
- Develop a plan for onboarding and succession planning of organizational leadership

PILLAR

5

Email is the #1 channel members named; web overhaul is a Board priority.

Engage Digitally & Communicate Year-Round

GOAL

Create a modern, welcoming digital presence that keeps members informed, engaged, and connected to ICSD and each other between conferences.

SUGGESTED TACTICS

- Modernize the ICSD website with clear navigation, streamlined signup, easy payment, and current security/SSL.
- Lead with email — members named it the #1 communication channel; send a regular newsletter on a reliable cadence.
- Designate a social media lead with a simple content plan across LinkedIn, X, and Facebook.
- Build hybrid into every conference and event so distance and cost are not barriers to participation.
- Refresh ICSD branding for consistency across digital and print materials.
- Develop a short curriculum guide to introduce social development in social work and social development programs.

Implementation Roadmap

2026 Foundation	2027 Build	2028 Expand	2029 Sustain
<ul style="list-style-type: none">■ Charter task-focused subcommittees (SCs) per pillar■ SCs develop operational plans for each pillar■ Modernize website & fix membership signup■ Strengthen Global South outreach	<ul style="list-style-type: none">■ Begin monthly newsletter cadence■ Prepare to submit SDI for indexing review■ Plan for a right-sized board in future■ Begin an online symposia series■ Scale & refine initiatives	<ul style="list-style-type: none">■ Issue policy briefs to UN bodies■ Strengthen active regional branches■ Mid-plan review & course correct■ Document & communicate impact	<ul style="list-style-type: none">■ Extend and deepen successful initiatives■ Publish annual & financial reports■ Celebrate measurable growth

Signals of Success by 2029

Membership

Measurable growth in paid members, with stronger representation from the Global South.

Policy Visibility

UN ECOSOC consultative status remains active; ICSD cited in SD policy conversations; ICSD is a valued international partner advancing SD globally.

SDI Journal

Published on schedule, indexed in Scopus/Google Scholar, impact factor pursued.

Regional Branches

At least four active regional branches convening local gatherings.

Governance

Effective participation and efficient governance processes, record keeping, annual reports, committee charters in place.

Digital Engagement

Modern website, routine newsletter, and active social channels.

Risks & Assumptions

KEY ASSUMPTIONS

- Volunteer leadership capacity will remain stable.
- Biennial conferences continue to generate member value and modest revenue.
- Members are willing to engage between conferences if invited well.
- Partnerships with UN bodies and sister organizations remain open to ICSD.
- Global interest/commitment in social development is sustained.

KEY RISKS

Volunteer burnout

Ambitious agenda strains a small volunteer base — mitigate by prioritizing and staging work.

Funding constraints

Limited budget for journal, website, and scholarships — pursue targeted fundraising and in-kind support.

Engagement drop-off

Members disengage between conferences — address with newsletter, webinars, and regional events.

Governance inertia

Reform is hard — build on board strengths while committing to plan for a more focused and effective structure.

Scholarship vs. advocacy tension

Members value both SDI and UN engagement; resource both intentionally rather than letting one crowd out the other.

FROM PLAN TO ACTION

This is ours to build — together.

Next steps

- Board endorses the 2026–2029 Strategic Plan.
- Pillar leads and subcommittees are charged with clear 2026 workplans.
- Members are invited to join a subcommittee aligned with their interest.
- The Task Team reports annual progress against the plan's signals of success.

Thank you to every member and board director who shared their voice in the 2026 strategy, UN engagement, and governance surveys.