



Strategic Intentions 2026/27-2029/30

2026/27 -2029/30



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Responsible Minister's statement

I am satisfied that the information on strategic intentions prepared by the Social Investment Agency is consistent with the policies and performance expectations of the Government.



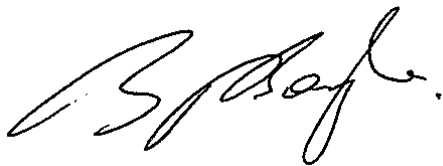
Hon Nicola Willis

Minister for Social Investment

3 July 2026

Chief Executive's statement of responsibility

In signing this information, I acknowledge that I am responsible for the information on the strategic intentions of the Social Investment Agency. This information has been prepared in accordance with sections 38 and 40 of the Public Finance Act 1989.



Brendan Boyle

Secretary for Social Investment and Chief Executive, Social Investment Agency

3 July 2026

Foreword

Our ambition is clear: to make social investment a standard way of working across the public sector, shaping better choices about priorities, funding, services and accountability. This Strategic Intentions document sets out how the Social Investment Agency will contribute to that goal.

At the heart of social investment is a simple proposition: public spending should make the greatest possible difference to people's lives, particularly for those with the greatest needs. That means supporting earlier, more effective responses that reflect the realities of people, families, whānau and communities. It also means shifting the way the system works, from responding late and in silos, towards decisions grounded in evidence, services that are better joined up, and investment focused on prevention, early intervention and lasting impact.

Success will be reflected in more consistent use of evidence to guide choices, funding directed to where it can make the greatest difference, and agencies, providers and communities working together around shared goals. It will also be reflected in a stronger discipline around understanding what works, for whom, and in what circumstances, and using that knowledge to improve both outcomes and value from public spending.

The Social Investment Agency has a distinctive role in supporting this shift. We will test and demonstrate new ways of working through the Social Investment Fund, generate insights and advice on where the system can improve, set standards for good social investment practice, and build the data, tools and capability needed to support better decisions. We will also work across government, with providers and with communities to help turn social investment from a concept into a practical and enduring way of working.

Underpinning this is the agency's commitment to being a capable, connected and influential organisation, one that works at scale, partners effectively across the system, and leads sustained change over time. By taking a long-term view, focusing on evidence and working in partnership, we can help ensure social investment delivers on its promise: better outcomes where they are needed most, and better value from the investment New Zealand makes in its people.

Who we are and what we do | Ko wai mātou, ā, he aha ngā mahi

Our context and operating environment

New Zealand invests significant public funding in the social sector, including services delivered by both government and community organisations. However, many people still do not experience the outcomes we would expect. Around one in five people, particularly those with complex needs, continue to experience poor life outcomes.

This reflects how the system works today. Support is often delivered separately across services and is not always aligned to the full needs of individuals and whānau. As a result, people can miss out on the right help at the right time, leading to ongoing and long-term disadvantage.

Many of the challenges people face are complex and span areas such as health, education, housing, and justice. This makes it difficult for any one service or agency to respond effectively. At the same time, there are growing expectations that public spending should make a clearer difference, with a stronger focus on understanding what works and improving results over time.

Advances in data and technology are making it easier to understand need, track progress, and improve services. Together, these changes are driving a shift toward providing support earlier, delivering services in a more joined-up way, and making better use of public resources.

Social investment

Social investment is the Government's approach to getting better results from social spending. At its core, it is about using funding more effectively in ways that are more likely to lead to improved outcomes for people. This means allocating funding to where it makes the biggest difference, funding services in ways that focus on outcomes and allow providers to adapt, and delivering services based on people's needs and adjusting support as those needs change.

Leading this change needs a strong central agency that can work across government and the wider social sector. By bringing together agencies, communities, and service providers, sharing information, and applying what is learned, support can be more timely, connected, and effective. Without this, efforts to improve outcomes for people with the greatest needs are likely to remain fragmented and less likely to lead to improved outcomes.

Our role and purpose

The Social Investment Agency was established in July 2024 to provide this leadership and help drive the implementation of social investment across the government and social sector¹. We contribute to the system in a distinct way through three core functions.

Setting direction through standards

We set clear expectations for how social investment should work across government. This includes defining good practice and supporting a consistent approach to funding, delivery, and assessing impact. We develop standards to guide agencies and monitor how they are applied. Learning from practice, including through the Social Investment Fund, helps us refine these expectations over time. Together, this supports a more consistent and transparent system with a stronger focus on results.

Building and using data and evidence to inform decisions

We use data and evidence to understand what works and where change is needed. This includes analysing performance and spending to understand what is delivering results. We also strengthen the data and evidence systems that support this work across government and the wider sector. We turn these insights into clear advice and practical tools, so decisions are informed by the best available information.

Enabling better investment across the system

We work across government to improve how services are funded and delivered, so resources are used more effectively. The Social Investment Fund is a key part of this work, allowing us to test new approaches and support earlier, more joined-up support for people with complex needs. We use what we learn to influence how funding is directed, including through advice on where changes are needed. We also support agencies to strengthen how they invest, including improving commissioning and aligning funding with people's needs.

Who we work with and how we work

Improving outcomes for people requires many parts of the system to work together in a more aligned way. This includes government agencies, iwi, communities, funders, and organisations that design and deliver services, each bringing different knowledge, roles, and perspectives.

Our role is to bring these groups together around shared problems and support more joined-up action. This includes building a common understanding of issues, highlighting where effort is not aligned, and helping coordinate responses where they will make the biggest difference.

¹ The Social Investment Agency was established on 1 July 2024, with its role expanded in 2025, to lead and strengthen the social investment approach across government, including setting standards, improving the use of data and evidence, reviewing social sector spending, and overseeing commissioning and the Social Investment Fund.

Our approach is practical and focused on what works. We look at how the system is operating, challenge whether it is delivering results, and identify where change is needed. New approaches are tested at a small scale, with a focus on learning what works in practice and building evidence over time. This work is grounded in the experience of agencies, service providers, iwi, and communities. Their insight helps ensure decisions reflect real needs and local context.

As a small agency, we focus on building strong relationships, working at pace, and adapting as we learn. This supports change that is practical, evidence-based, and more likely to lead to improved outcomes for people.






Contributing to Government priorities

We contribute to the achievement of Government priorities and targets with a particular focus on strengthening how outcomes are defined, measured, and used, so funding decisions are clearer, more consistent, and focused on where they will make the biggest difference. We contribute to wider public service priorities that depend on effective system performance. This includes supporting a more modern, joined-up public service, where services are easier to access and better aligned to people's needs, such as through the Government's digital public service strategy. Working with central agencies and other system leaders, we support more aligned decision-making, improved commissioning, and stronger coordination across government.

Our Strategic Direction | Tō Mātou Ahunga Rautaki

Our strategic framework

Our strategic framework, shown below, sets out how we contribute to enabling better outcomes for people, whānau, and communities.

| | | | | | |
|--|--|---|---|--|---|
| Outcome Sought | Better outcomes for people, especially those with the greatest needs | | | | |
| This requires | Earlier, more effective support that better meets people’s needs | | | | |
| Shifts needed in the system to achieve this | Decisions based on what works* | Decisions made closer to communities* | Support joined up around people with the greatest needs | A greater focus on early intervention and prevention | A system that works together around shared goals |
| Our impact | Decisions are informed by evidence and applied consistently Funding is directed and used in ways that deliver better outcomes A system that works together more effectively | | | | |
| We achieve these impacts by: | Improving the value and outcomes of social sector spending by: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Testing and demonstrating new ways of working, and measuring progress through the Social Investment Fund • Generating insights and providing advice on where the system can improve • Setting standards for social investment • Building the data, tools, and skills needed to support better decisions and improved social outcomes • Bringing government agencies, service providers, iwi, and communities together to work together towards shared goals | | | | |
| through our core functions of: | Enabling better investment | Building and using data and evidence | | Setting direction through standards | |
| our strategic priorities: | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Social Investment Fund driving system change • Improved investment practices across the social sector • Advice that shifts the system | | | | |
| developing an organisation that is: | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Capable and connected with the people, systems, and ways of working required to operate at scale and drive change across the system | | | | |
| and modelling our values |  <p>TĀNGATA We're about people We build trust and value people We communicate with clarity and care</p> |  <p>MANAWA MĀUI We are a catalyst for change We challenge the status quo We innovate and learn continuously</p> |  <p>TAUNAKITANGA We influence through evidence We act on insight and community voice We deliver with purpose and accountability</p> |  <p>PUARETANGA We're transparent by nature We lead with courage and integrity We prioritise wisely and manage expectations</p> |  <p>MAHI TAHI Stronger together We collaborate to achieve more We show up with professionalism and presence</p> |

* These shifts are complementary. Better decisions require both evidence about what works and insight from communities and local context, and need to be integrated in practice. The Social Investment Fund plays a role in testing how these can be brought together to improve results.

Our strategic priorities

To focus our efforts over the next few years, we will concentrate on three strategic priorities that shift the system, alongside a fourth priority to build our organisational capability to lead social investment. This fourth priority is set out in the Organisational Health and Capability section of this document.

The Social Investment Fund driving system change

The Social Investment Fund has been established as a new part of the social system. It takes a long-term, portfolio-neutral approach to commissioning services for people with complex needs. The Fund has two complementary roles. It tests new approaches and builds the evidence base on what works, and it demonstrates how effective approaches can be scaled or influence wider funding decisions across government. It works across agencies to bring funding together and deliver more coordinated responses. Using a test-and-learn approach, the Fund trials new ways of funding and delivering services, building evidence over time and showing how support can be provided earlier and in ways that better meet people's needs.

We will continue to develop the Fund, using what we learn to improve how the Fund operates and to inform our advice on how funding can be used more effectively across the social sector.

Over time, this will support more coordinated investment across government, better use of funding, and improved results for people with complex needs.

Improved investment practices across the social sector

We will set clear expectations, build capability, and help agencies use data and evidence to improve their decision-making. This includes supporting more consistent approaches to planning, funding, and assessing the impact of services. We will provide shared standards, tools, and clear information on what is working, so agencies can make better decisions and learn from each other.

Over time, this will lead to more consistent practice across government, better use of funding, and improved outcomes for people and whānau.

Advice that shifts the system

We will provide clear, evidence-based advice to Ministers on how social spending can deliver better results. We will show what is working, what is not, and where changes would make the biggest difference. This includes identifying where services are not meeting people's needs and where funding could be used more effectively. We will use data, analysis, and community insight to support this advice, and work with the Treasury and other central agencies to inform Budget decisions and wider system settings.

Over time, this will support better decisions about spending, shift funding toward what works, and improve results for people, especially those with the greatest needs.

Monitoring our progress

The Social Investment Agency is building a performance framework that will develop over time, from tracking early activities through to measuring outcomes and overall system impact, helping us understand whether social investment is delivering better results for New Zealand.

| Early Years | Moving Through | Ultimately |
|---|---|--|
| <p>Initially we have been measuring the activities and outputs that set up our central agency and Social Investment Fund functions, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • producing standards, insights, and evidence products • delivering advice and capability-building activities • launching early innovations through the Social Investment Fund • testing standards via spending reviews and Social Investment Fund activity • advising on and building the data infrastructure needed, and • how data and analysis are shaping decisions. | <p>We will continue to track what we deliver as our role grows. We will also start tracking how the system is using the social investment approach, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • whether investment advice is shaping decision-making • the adoption of shared tools, standards, and data • early results from trials and innovation • shifts toward outcomes-based commissioning • the impact of convening around shared outcomes and lessons from this, and • that we have the appropriate data to measure impact. | <p>As our work progresses we will measure the outcomes and impacts of our work, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • improvements in outcomes for priority groups • increased investment in effective prevention • reductions in high-cost service use • better long-term outcomes for people, whānau, and communities, and • a more adaptive, resilient sector with strong provider diversity and capability; a system more able to identify need and scale what works. |

Organisational Health and Capability | Te Hauora me te Āheitanga Whakahaere o te Rōpū

As a relatively new agency, we are building the capability needed to deliver our role and the outcomes we are seeking. We are focused on developing a capable, connected organisation with the people, systems, and ways of working required to operate at scale and drive change across the system. Our efforts are focused on five key dimensions.

People and leadership

We will build a high-performing workforce made up of people with a mix of skills and experience so that we have the capability and leadership needed to deliver our role. This includes strengthening expertise across policy, investment, commissioning, data, and relationships, and developing leaders who can work effectively in a complex system.

Areas of focus:

- Workforce strategy aligned to our priorities and required capability mix.
- Leadership development programme focused on system leadership and delivery.
- Clear capability frameworks and development pathways and processes.

Ways of working and operating model

We will establish a clear, integrated way of working so we operate as one organisation and can deliver consistently at scale. This includes strengthening our operating model, decision-making, and core processes.

Areas of focus:

- Defined and clear ways of working across the organisation aligned to our core functions and priorities with clear roles, responsibilities, and decision-making frameworks, and standardised processes for key areas.
- Integrated planning and performance processes.
- Continuous improvement approach to refine how we work.

We will be guided by Government decisions on the future shape and operation of the public service, ensuring our operating model evolves to support effective system-wide performance.

System leadership and partnerships

We will strengthen how we work across the system to support coordinated action and shared ownership of outcomes. This includes building strong relationships with government, iwi and Māori, communities, and social service organisations.

Areas of focus:

- Framework for system leadership and engagement across partners to support strengthened partnerships with key agencies and stakeholders.

- Iwi-Crown strategy (Te Rautaki o te Karauna me te Māori) and effective implementation of partnership commitments.
- Approaches to working with communities that support co-design and locally informed solutions.
- Mechanisms to support collective action on shared priorities.

Data, evidence, and insights capability

We will strengthen our ability to generate and use data and evidence to support better decision making and improve system performance.

Areas of focus:

- Development of core data and evidence infrastructure.
- Regular production of system-level insights and performance reporting.
- Frameworks and tools to support evidence-informed decision-making.
- Improved access to data for internal and external users.
- Clear standards for ethical and responsible use of data.

Technology and tools

We will use technology and tools, including artificial intelligence, to improve how we work, generate insights, and deliver results.

Areas of focus:

- Technology roadmap aligned to organisational priorities.
- Implementation of tools to support collaboration, analysis, and delivery.
- Use of AI to improve insight generation and efficiency.
- Strengthened data platforms and systems.
- Clear governance and guidance for responsible use of technology and AI.

Together, these dimensions will build an organisation that is capable, connected, and able to lead change across the system, supporting better decisions, more effective use of funding, and improved outcomes for people.