

2026-2030 FORUM STRATEGIC PLAN



GLOBAL VOLUNTEERING FORUM

www.forum-ids.org

INTRODUCTION

This Strategic Plan sets out Forum's commitment, over the next five years, to strengthen the role of volunteering in achieving sustainable development.

We launch this plan at a defining moment for our sector, alongside the International Year of Volunteers for Sustainable Development (IVY 2026) and spanning the final five years of the 2030 Agenda - a period when the role of volunteers, and the organisations that support them, is more vital than ever in responding to global challenges and driving social progress.

At a time of deep uncertainty for civil society and development cooperation, volunteers remain a powerful force for impact, connection, and transformation. Over the lifetime of this strategy, Forum will support its member organisations to navigate rapid change, from emerging technologies and new models of volunteering to shifts in funding and civic space.

The plan is founded on three core pillars - Convening, Research, and Standards - which together define our collective direction and priorities. Operating efficiency will underpin all areas of our work, ensuring our activities are effective, and aligned with our shared purpose.

Through **Convening**, we will continue to create spaces for members to share knowledge, connect across regions, and learn from each other, building a truly global network with strong representation in every region of the world.

Through **Research**, we will generate and share knowledge that helps the volunteering sector understand and respond to change, always ensuring that our work is accessible, practical, and relevant to our members' needs.

Through **Standards**, we will continue to evolve and promote the Global Volunteering Standard, both as a yardstick of good practice and as a support structure for organisations committed to strengthening their volunteer programmes.

This plan also marks the start of a new chapter in our identity. As we move forward, Forum and the annual IVCO conference will become the Global Volunteering Forum - a clearer, simpler expression of who we are and what we represent: a dynamic global community advancing volunteering as an essential force for sustainable development.

We look forward to working with our members and partners to strengthen global volunteering together.



James O'Brien
Executive Director



Heather Shapter
Chair, Forum Board of Directors

VISION, MISSION, AND VALUES

VISION

A world where ethical, impactful volunteering creates transformative change and strengthens global connections.

Mission

Forum brings members together to share, learn and collaborate — strengthening global volunteering through mutual learning, creating practical knowledge that informs practice, and advancing standards.

Values

Collaboration

Forum is a global community of organisations facing shared challenges and opportunities, and we are stronger when we work together.

We believe in the power of peer exchange, collective knowledge generation and partnership.

Mutuality

We see volunteering as a web of responsibilities between volunteers, organisations, and the communities they serve.

We promote humility, reciprocity, and mutual learning.

Openness

We are committed to honest, reflective dialogue.

Forum members share both achievements and the sometimes-challenging realities of practice — creating space for meaningful exchange.

Learning Mindset

We question assumptions, challenge our ways of working, and explore alternatives.

Our network supports ongoing reflection on what responsible and impactful volunteering looks like in a range of contexts.

Good Practice

We support our members to uphold high standards of good practice

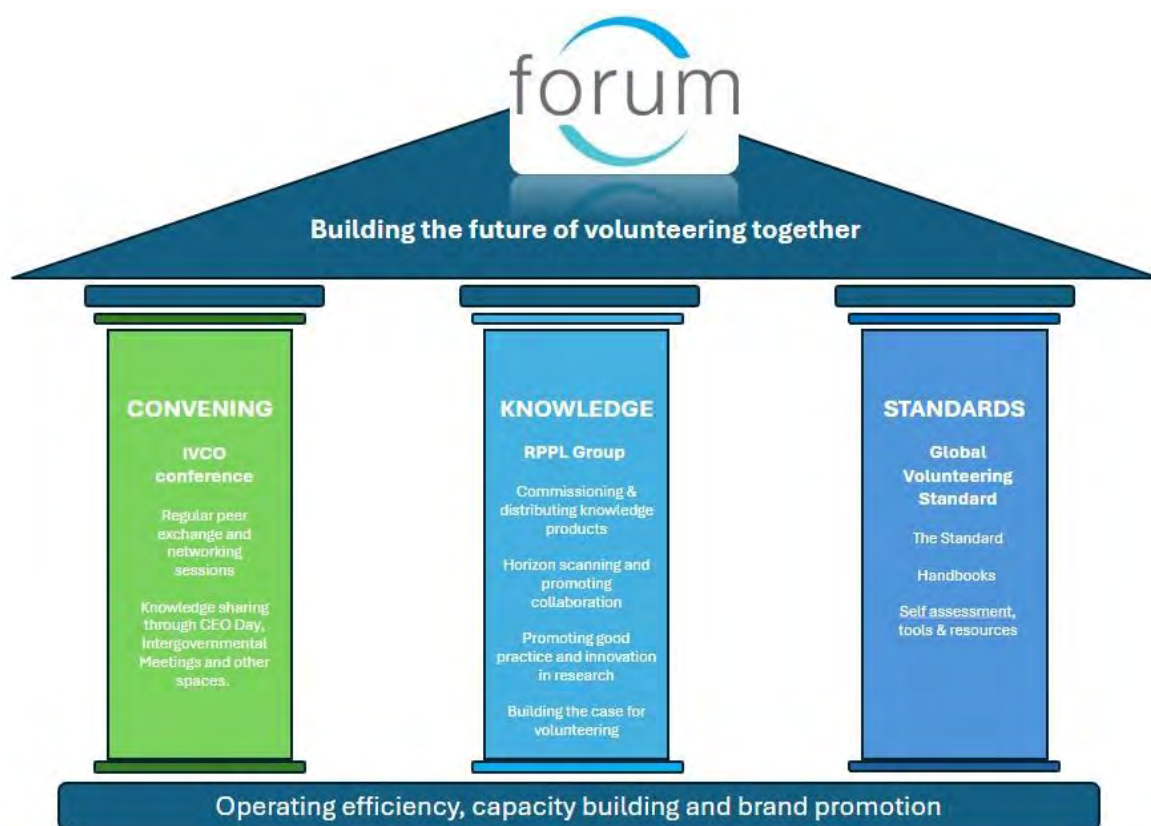
We promote approaches that centre community leadership, safeguard people and environments, and contribute meaningfully to sustainable development and global solidarity.

Solidarity

We believe in volunteering as a pathway to global justice and cooperation.

Our work is grounded in mutual respect, equity, and shared humanity.

STRATEGIC PILLARS



Our strategic plan 2026 – 2030 is founded on three core pillars: Convening, Research, and Standards, which together define our strategic direction and guide our collective priorities.

Operating efficiency will underpin all areas of our work, ensuring that our activities are streamlined, effective, and aligned with our purpose.

STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES

1. Convening for Impact

Facilitate regular, inclusive spaces for knowledge sharing, collaboration, and collective action in volunteering and development

Key initiatives

- Annual Global Volunteering Forum (IVCO) Conference
- Monthly Forum Community of Practice sessions
- Regular Working Group Meetings
- Annual CEO Roundtable meeting
- Annual Research Day
- Regular Intergovernmental Meetings
- Strategic partnerships with peer organisations
- Occasional webinars for Forum members and the wider volunteering community

Outputs

- Successful annual conference with strong participation and high satisfaction scores
- Regular Intergovernmental meetings hosted
- Monthly Community of Practice sessions conducted, with shared presentations/content distributed in multiple practical formats
- Collaborative initiatives with peer organisations (e.g., joint research, webinars, co-hosted dialogues, position papers).

Outcomes

- Improved knowledge sharing and peer learning, leading to better-informed strategies and practices across member organisations.
- Enhanced collaboration and partnerships among Forum members and with external stakeholders
- Stronger collective voice and influence in global volunteering and development policy spaces.
- Increased visibility and credibility of Forum as a thought leader and convener in the volunteering for development space.
- Broadened engagement of diverse member representatives (including staff and volunteers) in Forum activities.
- Greater alignment on sector priorities and standards, contributing to stronger advocacy and joint action

2. Connecting Knowledge to Practice

Conduct and coordinate high-quality, accessible, practical research that informs practice, policy, and advocacy efforts

Key initiatives

- Commissioning and distributing relevant, accessible, and high-quality knowledge products
- Engaging in PhD Collaboration with Northumbria University
- Creating spaces that promote sharing and collaboration between practitioners and researchers
- Building stronger foresight capacity across the sector
- Promoting good practice and innovation in research
- Building and articulating the case for support for volunteering in development
- Disseminating research from Forum members and external sources

Outputs

- Commissioned research and learning papers (thematic studies, case studies, evidence briefs) published and made publicly accessible
- Research dissemination events held (webinars, briefings, conference sessions) with practitioner/researcher engagement
- A continuously updated body of relevant knowledge that supports strategic decision-making and guides the future of volunteering practice available to members online
- Guidelines or tools developed to support good practice in ethical and inclusive research methodologies
- Capacity-building tools, resources, and training sessions delivered to support innovation and improve member programming
- Communication materials and evidence briefs developed to articulate the value of volunteering to external stakeholders
- Strategic research collaborations initiated (with academic institutions or peer organisations)
- Evidence-based messaging and advocacy materials developed

Outcomes

- Increased innovation, effectiveness, and impact across member programs and organisational practices
- Increased uptake of research in program design, advocacy, and policy by Forum members
- Stronger collaboration between researchers and practitioners across the volunteering and development sector,
- A more evidence-informed sector, with members better able to respond to emerging trends and risks
- Greater recognition of volunteering's value through compelling, data-driven narratives
- Strengthened credibility and influence of Forum in global development conversations
- Improved quality and relevance of research conducted within the sector
- More inclusive, ethical, and innovative approaches to research embedded in practice

3 Raising Standards

Promote responsible, impactful and ethical volunteering in development through the Global Volunteering Standard (GVS)

Key initiatives

- Launch and promotion of the updated GVS
- Launch an updated online platform with interactive tools
- Update and disseminate the GVS Handbooks, and continue the handbook series
- Provide accompaniment and support for implementation
- Maintain an accessible and evolving body of knowledge on good volunteering practices, linked to the Standard
- Position the Standard as an advocacy tool and build global endorsements
- Conduct a full review of the Standard by 2028

Outputs

- Third Edition of the GVS published and actively promoted
- New platform and interactive GVS tools launched and maintained
- Handbooks revised and distributed to members and partners
- Accompaniment support delivered to implementing organisations
- Resource hub maintained with evolving best practices
- Endorsements and statements of alignment secured from key stakeholders
- Review framework for 2028 designed and adopted

Outcomes

- Increased capacity among volunteer-involving organisations to implement responsible and ethical practices
- Broader and deeper adoption of the Global Volunteering Standard by members and sector partners
- Greater understanding of good practice across the volunteering and development sector
- Strengthened global positioning of Forum as a leader in ethical volunteering
- More effective advocacy for responsible volunteering at national and international levels



Global Volunteering Forum
C/O World University Service of Canada (WUSC)
1404 Scott Street, Ottawa, Ontario K1Y 4M8, Canada

www.forum-ids.org