

# Creating a Digitally Confident Third Sector in Scotland:

A call to action

EXPLORE



ADAPT



INVEST



COLLABORATE



Over the  
past 6 months...



19 leaders from across Scotland's third sector have been working and learning together to develop their knowledge, skills and vision for digital leadership

Many started the process hoping to develop knowledge and skills to enable them to guide the development of social media strategies or websites.

Having explored the opportunities and threats provided by new technology and the internet, they leave the process with a commitment to drive transformational change in their organisations to maximise their impact on individuals and communities.

This document presents their call to action to create a digitally confident third sector in Scotland.

# The story so far...

The digital revolution has already happened.

New technology and the internet has changed the way we live our lives.

As a sector, have we evolved the way we deliver services to support individuals and communities?



There is no disputing the scale of change that has taken place since the digital revolution. It has changed how we choose to communicate, learn, shop, bank, engage in discussion, get our news and be entertained.

New technologies and the internet have enabled small businesses and entrepreneurs to challenge global corporations and traditional business models.

Organisations across the public and private sectors are beginning to consider the how they can become more efficient, effective and responsive by taking advantage of new technologies and the internet. The third sector must also consider how it should adapt and evolve to maximise the opportunities, as well as minimise the risks.

Adapting to a digital world is not simply about having a website, making an app or using social media effectively. It also goes beyond the opportunities provided by the internet for fundraising and marketing.

The starting point must be people. We need to ask service users, beneficiaries, donors, funders and stakeholders how they want to interact with us in a digital world. We also need to understand how staff and volunteers can use technology to maximise their impact.

This will then require us to challenge the status quo, redesign services and change the way we work. Such fundamental change can only be achieved through effective leadership.

Leaders in the third sector do not need to be digital experts, but we do need to lead change which will enable our organisations to be fit-for-purpose in a digital world.

# Doing things differently...

At the heart of digital evolution is the desire to do things differently. Ultimately to transform organisational practices. What this means will be different in each of our organisations.

The following themes emerged

**Effective leadership**

**Digital culture**

**Service delivery**

**Data driven**

**Flexible technology**

Effective leadership is the starting point from which all the other themes flow and these are common ways we can be effective leaders in a digital world...



## We need to explore:

- The changed expectations of our service users, beneficiaries, trustees, donors, funders, stakeholders, staff and volunteers in a digital world
- New technology and tools available to support our work
- New ways others are solving long standing problems

## We need to adapt by:

- Challenging the 'way we've always done it'
- Embedding digital across organisational strategy
- Delivering services digitally, where appropriate
- Creating a culture that maximises digital opportunities
- Being agile and responsive, using data to drive quick decision making

## We need to invest in:

- Being curious, testing and learning; not simply to be seen as innovative, but to deliver better services
- Equipping people with the skills, equipment and resources to be effective in their roles
- Shifting from old technologies and bespoke systems to greater use of low-cost, off-the-shelf, cloud-based applications

## We need to collaborate by:

- Sharing resources, skills and technology
- Using open standards, open data and open source platforms wherever possible

None of this is easy to do, particularly given the broader external challenges facing the sector. However, digital evolution does provide a rare opportunity to lower costs and be more efficient, at the same time as improving outcomes.

# The next step...

## **For leaders to work together to create a digitally confident third sector in Scotland.**

We recognise that change will not happen overnight or without rethinking where investment is needed. Many organisations are just starting to respond to the opportunities presented by the internet and new technology. The distance to travel can feel vast. However, we must respond to these opportunities and develop confident leaders for a digital world.

We therefore call on three audiences to take specific actions that will make a significant difference to the digital evolution of the third sector in Scotland. We believe these are achievable within one year and will provide the foundation for Scotland's third sector to be world-leading. Our work here is beginning, we will monitor progress to these commitments openly and use them as a springboard for future years.



## Charity trustees, chief executives and other third sector leaders

- Ensure that you have the knowledge you need to drive digital change and engage in networks to support your professional development
- Understand the digital skills of your staff, volunteers and end users, and invest in training and support to develop them.

## OSCR

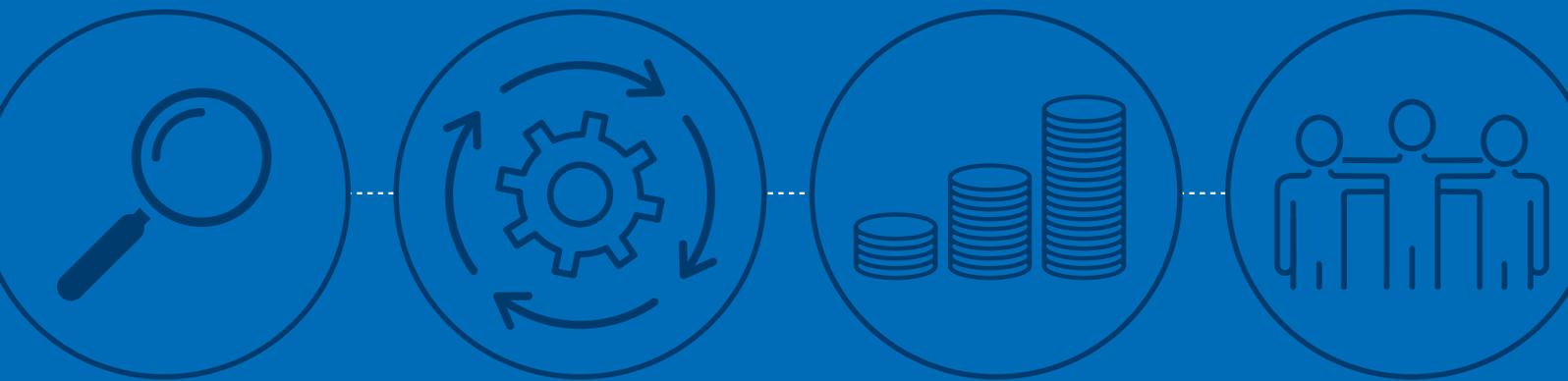
- Encourage charities to recruit a trustee to their board who understands digital and can support organisational change.
- Highlight best practice in digital adoption in charities to inspire and motivate other organisations.

## Funders

- Make explicit statements about the importance of digital and advocate for consideration of a digital approach in the work you fund.
- Train grants officers to understand how to assess and evaluate digital initiatives.

SCVO will work in partnership with key stakeholders over the coming year to support the achievement of these actions, as part of its 2020 Digital Strategy.

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