



International
Cooperative
Alliance

Principal Documents – Part II

Extraordinary General Assembly

2 July 2025

Manchester, United Kingdom

17. Strategic Plan 2026-2030

The process:

At the ICA Board meeting in Cali, Colombia, March 2024, the Board unanimously approved the motion to develop a refreshed strategy for the ICA for the last 5 SDG years, period 2026-2030. In New Delhi, the Director General presented the first draft of the strategy to the General Assembly. This draft was in full synchronicity with the New Delhi Global Cooperative Conference focal areas on people, data, advocacy, finance and future. At this General Assembly it was announced that through consultations with regions, sectors and thematic groups, and after profound discussions at the ICA Board meeting in Punta Cana, Dominican Republic, April last, a final version will be tabled at the General Assembly in Manchester, UK, 2 July 2025, for adoption. Should the General Assembly approve the 2026-2030 strategy entitled Practice, Promote and Protect, this extended version will be offered as a blueprint to regions and sectors to allow them to shape the 2026-2030 strategy in full synchronicity with the ICA Global Strategy. With these strategies in place, the entire ICA ecosystem can enter the 2026-2030 era as one movement with one strategy, echoing one brand. Furthermore, we will derive a communication summary from the new strategy for public use and for a large audience.



APPROVAL OF THE STRATEGIC PLAN 2026-2030	
YES	
NO	
ABSTAIN	

PRACTICE, PROMOTE AND PROTECT:

ICA's Strategic Plan to Empower the Future of Cooperatives
(2026–2030)

Practice, Promote and Protect.

The ICA Strategy 2026–2030: Practice, Promote, Protect is a bold and ambitious roadmap designed to drive the cooperative movement forward with clarity and impact. This plan is not just aspirational—it is actionable. It reflects an ambitious yet achievable commitment to strengthening cooperatives worldwide, ensuring they are not only thriving but also shaping the future of business, society, and the economy.

By practicing cooperative values, promoting the cooperative model, and protecting our shared identity, this strategy empowers cooperatives to grow, innovate, and lead. It is a plan built for action—designed to create measurable progress while reinforcing the movement's resilience in an ever-changing world. Now is the time to take decisive steps to ensure that cooperatives are recognized, supported, and positioned as key drivers of sustainable development.

This strategy is the result of a truly collaborative process. Regional and sectoral representatives, thematic committees, and cooperative leaders from around the world have come together to shape and evolve this plan. It is not a strategy imposed from the top down, but one built collectively by and for the global cooperative community. Through this shared vision, we are strengthening our movement, ensuring that cooperatives everywhere have the tools, influence, and solidarity needed to succeed.

Preface

Letter from The President of the Board of Directors

Dear Cooperators

This document is the result of a coordinated effort by the Leadership Group, under the guidance of our Director General Jeroen Douglas, and enriched by the contributions of leaders from organizations across different countries.

It is, ultimately, a tool that brings together the perspectives, challenges, and concerns of the regions, sectors, and committees that make up our organization.

We do this—have done it, and will continue to do it—of course, within a context shaped by strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats.

On the following pages, you will find various elements that can be categorized within those four areas, but more importantly, you will find a consensus-based proposal on how to address the medium- and long-term challenges we face.

The environment in which we must act is highly complex. Major social, economic, geopolitical, and environmental challenges lie ahead. In fact, we are already facing them every day through the work of each of our organizations.

It is no coincidence that the prelude to this plan is a new International Year of Cooperatives proclaimed by the United Nations.

That organization, representing the nation-states of the world, has—as we know—established an agenda to be fulfilled by 2030 with 17 Sustainable Development Goals. However, as humanity, we are far from securing a future with decent work, gender equity, zero hunger, or protection of ecosystems.

That is why this strategic plan is not merely a document to strengthen internal management mechanisms within our organization—it is a tool to increase our influence on public authorities in every country and to enhance our impact within each of our communities.

Our sustainable development agenda began 200 years ago and is ongoing. For that, we must continue to put our principles into practice, promote our socio-business model, and protect our identity—one that was forged two centuries ago.

We must do so on a global scale, recognizing the International Cooperative Alliance as the Common Home of all cooperators, and also at the local level, alongside the members of each cooperative in their own territories.

As we often say, for major global challenges, we offer local solutions rooted in our communities. These communities, by organizing their cooperatives to produce, consume, work, educate themselves, care for each other, build their living environments, save, and invest—among many other actions—are building a sustainable future day by day.

Finally, when we speak of building the future, we speak of generating change in the medium and long term, as described in this plan. We are speaking, then, of a journey initiated by those of us currently in international leadership roles, but which will be continued—and eventually led—by other colleagues, likely emerging from the powerful cooperative youth we see today.

That is why it is essential to go beyond our borders, to spread the proposals contained here among the millions of members of our cooperatives, to invite new generations into the dialogue, and to expand the impact of our daily activities toward the goals projected in this document.

I trust that we are up to the task. Together, cooperating—as we have always done.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Ariel Guarco".

Ariel Guarco

President, ICA Board of Directors

Preface

Letter from ICA Leadership

One Movement, One Strategy, One Organization

The cooperative movement has always been defined by the strength of its unity. Across regions, sectors, and cultures, we share a common purpose: to build a more just, sustainable, and inclusive world through cooperation. As we move forward with this strategic plan, we, the leaders of the ICA (the undersigned) reaffirm that **we are one movement, with one strategy, working as one organization** to achieve our shared vision.

This strategy is not just a framework—it is a collective commitment. Its success depends on our ability to work together, align our efforts, and pull in the same direction. Each cooperative, federation, and stakeholder plays a vital role in advancing our goals, and only through coordinated action can we realize the full potential of the cooperative model.

By embracing this unified approach, we strengthen our impact at every level—locally, regionally, and globally. Together, we will build a cooperative movement that is more resilient, innovative, and influential than ever before. **This is our strategy, and it will only be effective if we implement it as one.**

The Minimum is the Maximum: A Commitment to the Full Strategy

For the cooperative movement to thrive, we cannot approach this strategy as a menu of options to pick and choose from. The minimum commitment must be the maximum effort. Each element of this strategy is interconnected—our goals are not isolated initiatives but part of a larger, cohesive vision. It is a minimally defined blueprint that gives maximum autonomy to regions and sectors to ensure meaningfulness in every part

of the ICA ecosystem. Hence, not a top-down marching order, but rather a comprehensive and recognizable global framework that stimulates interconnectivity and unity whilst being proud of our diversity.

Partial engagement will not drive the systemic change we seek. If we are to truly transform the world through the cooperative movement, strengthen our impact, and meet our collective goals, we must be all in. Every cooperative, every sector, and every region must take ownership of this strategy in its entirety. When we fully commit—aligning our efforts, integrating our priorities, and driving change together—the cooperative movement will reach its highest potential.

This is not just a strategy; it is a call to action. The success of one goal depends on the success of all, and progress in one area strengthens progress in another. **By embracing the full scope of this plan, we maximize our impact and ensure that no cooperative and no community is left behind.**

A Strategy for the Movement, Not Just the Organization

While this strategy is developed and supported by the International Cooperative Alliance (ICA), it is not a business plan for ICA as an organization—it is a strategy for the entire cooperative movement. ICA serves as a steward of this collective vision, but its success depends on the active participation and commitment of cooperatives, federations, apex organizations, and stakeholders across all sectors and regions.

This strategy is designed to strengthen and expand the cooperative movement. It is a framework for how cooperatives can grow, innovate, and lead in addressing global challenges. The role of ICA is to convene, facilitate, and support cooperatives in implementing this strategy, but **the responsibility for execution belongs to all of us.**

Every cooperative, regardless of size, sector, or geography, has a role to play in making this strategy a reality. By working together under a shared vision, we can drive meaningful progress that benefits our members, our communities, and the future of the cooperative movement as a whole.

Regional and Sectoral Strategies: Strengthening the Movement from Within

This strategy is designed to be a **unifying framework** for the cooperative movement, encompassing the work of regional and sectoral organizations while ensuring alignment with our shared global vision. While each region and sector faces unique challenges and opportunities, their strategies are not separate from this movement-wide approach—**they are an integral part of it.**

Regional and sectoral organizations will develop their own strategies **within this broader movement strategy**, ensuring that their priorities and initiatives contribute to the collective goals we have set. This approach allows for adaptability while maintaining cohesion, ensuring that cooperatives worldwide are moving in the same direction while responding to their specific local and industry needs.

By embedding regional and sectoral strategies within this movement-wide framework, we create **a stronger, more interconnected cooperative ecosystem**—one where the success of each cooperative, region, and sector reinforces the success of the whole. The movement thrives when we act together, leveraging our diversity while remaining united in purpose. **This strategy belongs to all of us, and its success depends on our ability to integrate and align our efforts at every level.**

A Principles-Based Strategy: A Blueprint for the Movement

This strategy is not a set of rigid rules—it is a **principles-based blueprint** for the cooperative movement. It provides direction, focus, and shared goals, but it is designed to be adaptable to the diverse realities of cooperatives around the world.

Cooperatives thrive on values of **self-help, democracy, solidarity, and shared prosperity**. This strategy reflects those principles, offering a framework that guides action while allowing for flexibility in how it is applied. It is not about compliance; it is about commitment. It is not about restrictions; it is about opportunities.

By using this strategy as a **compass rather than a rulebook**, cooperatives, federations, and sectoral organizations can shape their own path while staying aligned with the broader vision. This is a movement-wide effort—a **collective commitment to cooperation, innovation, and shared success**. Together, we will use this strategy to build a stronger, more resilient, and more impactful cooperative movement.

Regarding Cooperatives

This year marks the ICA's 130th Anniversary. We are the International Cooperative Alliance, a global movement encompassing over 3 million cooperative enterprises worldwide. Consequently, we have chosen to use the terms 'cooperatives' or simply 'coops' throughout this document. The cooperative movement lies at the heart of the social and solidarity economy; indeed, we consider it the most advanced protagonist, with a proven track record in over 150 countries across numerous sectors of the global economy. The ICA formally embeds eight of these sectors:

- **Agriculture:** Represented by the International Co-operative Agricultural Organisation (ICAO).
- **Banking and Finance:** Represented by the International Cooperative Banking Association (ICBA).
- **Consumer Cooperatives:** Represented by Consumer Co-operatives Worldwide (CCW), which includes retail cooperatives.

- **Fisheries:** Represented by the International Fish Cooperative Organisation (ICFO).
- **Healthcare:** Represented by the International Health Cooperative Organisation (IHCO).
- **Housing:** Represented by Co-operative Housing International (CHI).
- **Insurance:** Represented by the International Cooperative and Mutual Insurance Federation (ICMIF), which includes mutual insurance.
- **Industrial and Service Cooperatives:** Represented by the International Organisation of Industrial, Artisanal and Service Producers' Co-operatives (CICOPA), a broad category encompassing worker cooperatives and cooperatives in various service industries.

Connected to these eight sectors and our four operational regions (**Americas, Africa, Europe, Asia-Pacific**), and supported by our five knowledge committees on **gender, youth, research, law, and development**, we define the current ICA ecosystem.

However, the cooperative landscape extends much further, with significant economic activity in sectors such as education, tourism, energy/utilities, social care, ICT and digital cooperatives, the gig economy, and arts and culture, as well as worker cooperatives beyond industry and services. Although these sectors are not yet formally organized within the ICA's structure, this strategy recognizes them as integral parts of the global cooperative movement.

Cooperatives are fundamentally about member ownership, a focus on member benefit, democratic governance, and solidarity. Therefore, this document broadens its scope to include mutual organizations, which have a history predating cooperatives and are successful market actors in over 80 countries. The cooperative movement seeks to build an inclusive structure, incorporating mutuals and other economic actors that adhere to the ICA's core values and principles. We include social enterprises, civil society actors working in the socio-economic sphere, self-help groups, farmer producer organizations, and many other economic actors organized around member ownership, fair value distribution, and democratic practices. The global economy is vast and diverse, yet

we are united by our pride in being resilient and demonstrating a cooperative competitiveness that stands in stark contrast to neoliberal approaches and their associated plutocracies.

Cooperatives truly build a better world. That's why we are coops.

Word of Thanks

“*Practice, Promote and Protect.*” is a collaborative effort made possible by the dedication of numerous enthusiastic cooperators and institutions. This document has benefited significantly from extensive consultations.

I extend my sincere gratitude to my colleagues on the Global Management Team: Agnès Mathis (Director, Cooperatives Europe), Danilo Salerno (Director, Cooperativas Las Americas), and Balu Iyer (Director, Asia-Pacific). Their regional insights and flexibility in updating our current strategy – which this document will supersede – were invaluable.

I am also deeply thankful for the constructive comments and dialogues with various sector participants. In particular, I wish to acknowledge Jungsik Jung (ICAO), Bhima Subramanyam (the dedicated leader of ICBA), Todor Ivanov (leading CCW), Carlos Zarco (President of IHCO) and his supportive colleague José Perez (also of IHCO), Blase Lambert (leader of CHI) and Guido Schwarzendahl (also CHI), Shaun Tarbuck (still a key supporter of ICMIF and the driving force behind www.cm50.coop), and Diana Dovgan (Secretary General of CICOPA), as well as Guiseppe Guerini, President of the European CECOP.

The insightful contributions from our knowledge committees were also crucial. Special thanks are due to Cynthia Giagnocavo Chair of the Committee of Cooperative Research for her numerous constructive ideas and textual feedback; Hagen Henry, Chair of the Cooperative Law Committee, Francisca Ottolenghi, Chair of the International Cooperative Alliance Development Platform, and Marcelina Zjawińska, representative of ICA's Youth Committee.

The Global ICA Board mandated the development of this strategy during my first Board meeting in Cali, Colombia, last March, with the aim of launching it during the 2nd UN International Year of Cooperatives ([2025.coop](https://www.2025.coop)). I am immensely grateful for the consistently constructive support of the entire Board.

Furthermore, the Board commissioned a dedicated Strategy Leadership Group to guide this process. My sincere thanks go to this entire team, chaired by Ariel Guarco (President of the ICA, and my ultimate sparring partner and teacher in the wonderful world of cooperatives), and including Doug O'Brien (President and CEO of NCBA CLUSA, the US apex body to the ICA), Simona Cavazzutti (President of Paraguayan Concopar), Nelson Kuria (Chairman of the Board of Kenyan CIC Insurance Group), Todor Ivanov (in his capacity and also representing Petar Stefanov, President of Cooperatives Europe and President of the Central Cooperatives Union, Bulgaria), and Savitri Singh (Deputy Executive Director, National Cooperative Union of India, and also representing Chandra Pal Yadav, President of ICA Asia Pacific and Chairman of Indian cooperative KRIBHCO).

My appreciation also extends to my own team at the Global Office in Brussels, Belgium, who laid the foundation for this document back in spring 2024. Thank you all for your hard work and the many iterations that have resulted in this joint product.

I also acknowledge Rebecca Harvey, executive editor of Co-operative News, for her brainstorming support at the very beginning of this process. During that initial session and our Strategy Workshop last February, Elsa Scholte, my friend from Solidaridad and its International Communication Manager, brought her characteristic excellence to the process, the people involved, and the content itself. Many thanks to you both.

This document reached a new level of quality thanks to what Howard Brodsky kindly refers to as 'my A-Team'. I am deeply indebted to Megan Michelakos, co-founder of Trebeltree, for her exceptional chief editing and lay-out work and for her insightful contributions as a co-thinker during our workshop in August 2024 at the premises of CCA Global Partners in Manchester, New Hampshire. Her many

hours and days of dedication have truly paid off, and I appreciate her suggestion for the title, among other things. Since that workshop at CCA Global, Justin Hammons – co-founder of the Principle 6 Cooperative – has been an invaluable sparring partner at every step and stage of this document's development. Our collaboration has not only been productive but has also led to a valued friendship. I am extremely grateful to both of you!

Finally, it is no exaggeration to say that without Howard Brodsky, this document would not have come to fruition. As a distinguished figure in the history of world cooperatives and the first American recipient of our Rochdale Pioneers Award in 2019, Howard provided crucial leadership, guidance, and direction from the very beginning to the end. He exemplified the true meaning of Principle 6: cooperation among cooperatives. My gratitude to you is immense.



Jeroen Douglas

Jeroen Douglas
Director-General, ICA

Executive Summary

A Global Overview

A Strategy for a Changing World

The ICA Strategic Plan 2026–2030 is designed to guide the cooperative movement through a rapidly changing global landscape. Cooperatives operate in an environment shaped by profound transformations in **technology, governance, economy, climate, and social structures**, necessitating a forward-looking approach that ensures resilience, adaptability, and impact.

This strategy builds upon the **Statement on the Cooperative Identity**, reaffirming the cooperative movement's role in tackling major global challenges, fostering economic democracy, and strengthening its position as a people-centered business model. Through a consultative process, this plan integrates insights from regional, sectoral, and thematic leaders to create a strategy that is both comprehensive and actionable, ensuring alignment across the global cooperative ecosystem.

The strategy is framed within ICA's Theory of Change, providing a structured approach to achieving measurable outcomes. It includes clearly defined short-term (2030) and long-term (2035) goals, ensuring that cooperative-led initiatives remain ambitious yet achievable. A key focus is on fostering greater **collaboration, innovation, and financial sustainability**, reinforcing the cooperative model's competitive edge in a rapidly evolving world.



Strategic Objectives

The plan is built around five core strategic objectives:



1. Inclusive Opportunities in Cooperatives – Expanding access to cooperative leadership, economic participation, and governance for all, with a particular focus on youth, women, and underrepresented groups.



2. Strengthening Cooperative Networks and Cooperation – Enhancing collaboration across cooperative sectors, regions, and thematic areas to build a stronger, more interconnected global movement.

-  **3. Building Awareness and Membership Growth** – Promoting cooperative identity, increasing public recognition, and attracting new members through education and advocacy.
-  **4. Enabling Regulation and Policy Recognition** – Advocating for policies and legal frameworks that recognize and support cooperatives as a distinct and sustainable business model.
-  **5. Advancing Cooperative Competitiveness** – Providing cooperatives with the research, technology, and financial tools necessary to scale while maintaining cooperative values.





Strategic Interventions: A Framework for Implementation

To drive these objectives, ICA has developed five Strategic Interventions that categorize initiatives into key areas of focus:



- **People:** Strengthening leadership, ensuring inclusive governance, and expanding cooperative services to marginalized communities.



- **Data:** Leveraging cooperative-specific research and data to inform decision-making and improve transparency.



- **Advocacy:** Strengthening cooperative representation in policymaking and legal frameworks.



- **Finance:** Expanding financial resources and investment opportunities tailored to cooperative needs.



- **Future:** Embracing digital transformation and innovation to ensure cooperatives remain relevant and competitive in a changing economic landscape.



Key Impacts on Cooperatives

This strategy is designed to create tangible, measurable impacts for **individual cooperatives**, ensuring they are positioned to grow and succeed. Expected outcomes include:

- **More Members Recruited and Engaged** – Expanding cooperative membership and participation.
- **Strengthening Cooperative Knowledge** – Providing better access to cooperative education, research, and data.
- **Connecting with Core Values** – Ensuring cooperatives maintain alignment with cooperative identity and principles.
- **Inspiring and Leading Change** – Equipping cooperative leaders with the skills to drive change and innovation.
- **Scaling with Cooperative Values** – Supporting cooperative growth without compromising democratic governance and principles.
- **Attracting More Youth and Women** – Increasing diversity in cooperative leadership and participation.
- **Making Smarter Decisions** – Leveraging data and research to drive informed decision-making.
- **Gaining Community Recognition** – Strengthening public trust and credibility of cooperatives.

- **Benefiting from Public Trust** – Enhancing cooperative reputation through transparency and ethical business practices.
- **Cooperative Model Trends on Social** – Elevating cooperatives in public discourse and media representation.
- **Unlocking Growth Opportunities** – Expanding access to financing and capital for cooperative development.
- **Facilitating Cooperative Creation** – Providing resources and support for new cooperative enterprises.
- **Tapping into Global Networks** – Strengthening international cooperation and market access for cooperatives.
- **Building a Stronger Cooperative Ecosystem** – Creating a resilient and interdependent global network of cooperatives.
- **Staying Competitive with Technology** – Ensuring cooperatives remain innovative and digitally adaptable.
- **Aligning with Cooperative Networks** – Strengthening ties between cooperatives and their federations.
- **Leading on Sustainability** – Integrating sustainability into cooperative operations and business models.
- **Supporting a Greener Future** – Encouraging cooperative-led environmental initiatives and practices.

Conclusion

This strategic plan provides a roadmap for cooperatives worldwide to thrive in a changing world. By advancing **inclusive growth, digital transformation, financial accessibility, and policy advocacy**, ICA aims to strengthen the cooperative movement's role in shaping a more equitable, sustainable, and resilient global economy.

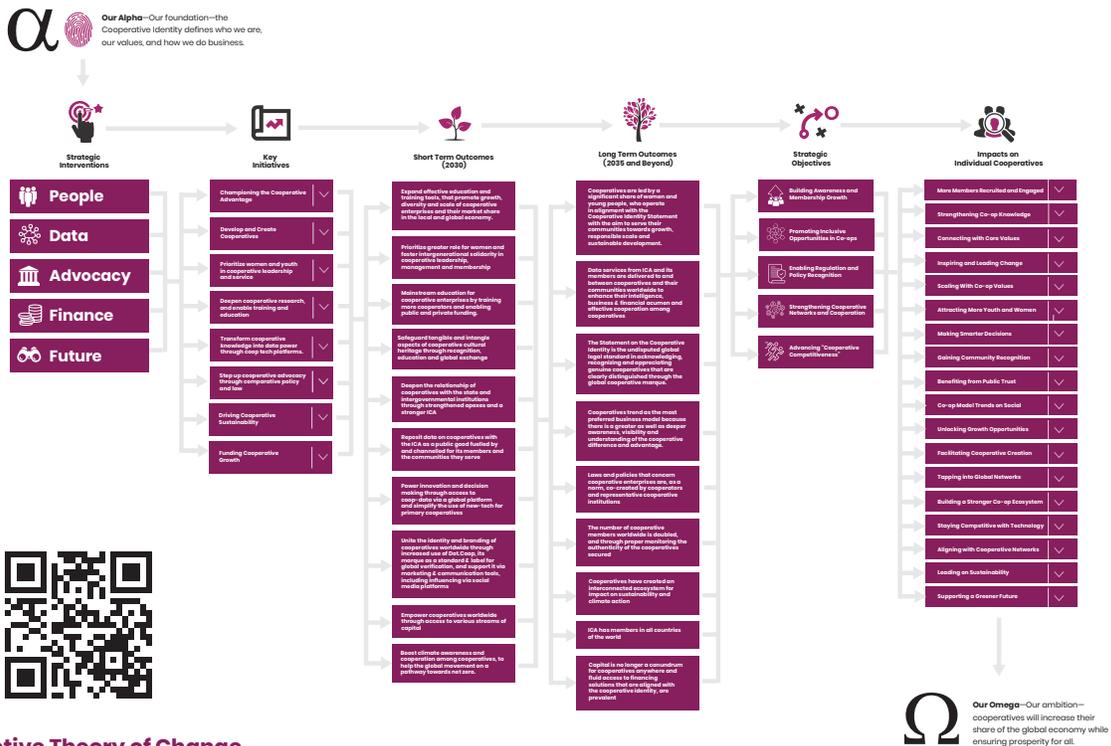
The success of this plan depends on collective action, requiring cooperatives, stakeholders, and policymakers to align efforts and commit to this shared vision. Together, cooperatives will lead the way in **delivering sustainable, community-driven economic progress for generations to come.**

Our Theory of Change

The cooperative movement stands at a pivotal moment. As global challenges reshape economies and societies, cooperatives must not only adapt but lead. ICA's Theory of Change provides a strategic roadmap to ensure cooperatives grow stronger, expand their influence, and shape a more equitable global economy. At the core of this strategy is our Alpha and Omega—our foundation and our ambition. Our Alpha is the Statement on the Cooperative Identity, which defines who we are and how we undertake our Cooperative Enterprise which continues to be people-centered, planet conscious, and builds peace.

But identity must translate into action. Our Omega is a future where cooperatives represent a significantly larger share of the global economy while ensuring prosperity for all. Cooperation must move from alternative to essential—scaling from principle to power.

A Theory of Change outlines the logical path from vision to impact. It identifies the strategic interventions that create conditions for success, the key initiatives that turn those interventions into action, and the short and long-term outcomes that measure progress.



Interactive Theory of Change

What's Inside this Document:

Chapter 1 – Introduction

Chapter 2 – Opportunity and Responsibility

Chapter 3 – ICA Key Themes

Chapter 4 – What Success Looks Like

Chapter 5 – Delivering Solutions

Chapter 6 – The ICA Theory of Change

Chapter 7 – Strategy Meets Action

Chapter 8 – From Action to Impact

Chapter 9 – Going Local

Chapter 1

Strategy Evolved

The Meaningful Outside in Rapidly Changing Times

This document saw light during the UN's 2nd International Year of Cooperatives. 2025 is anticipated to be a year of significant global shifts through technological advancements (AI), and geopolitical shifts towards a more multipolar world with growing global tensions and social change, both with widening as well as shrinking civic space. Democracy, equality and inclusivity are at stake. Our answer is clear: the values and principles of cooperatives need to be practiced, promoted and protected!

Can we still imagine a world, in which all people have equal rights and opportunities to develop, a world society organized in such a way that peace, freedom, equality, and human rights are guaranteed, in which everyone's livelihood is supported by a global welfare system, in which humans live in balance with nature and nothing is done that undermines the living and development opportunities of future generations?

For if the dream of a just and sustainable world is disturbed by anything, it is by the nightmares of our time.

There are quite a few. The possibilities of progress, even the existence and survival of many people in the North and South, East and West, are threatened by:

- **A climate crisis and a biodiversity crisis**, almost irreversible, because tipping points have been reached.
- **Wars** that have returned, as a supposedly legitimate

instrument, in which one invokes a right to defend oneself against anyone. Escalation follows escalation, and the launching of weapons of mass destruction comes closer.

- **Increasing poverty, hunger, and economic inequality.**
- Swelling **migration and refugee** flows.
- **Undermining of democratic processes** and democratic thought. Rise of authoritarian regimes, with lust for power, arbitrariness, violation, and denial of human rights.
- Weakening and **dismantling of the international legal order** and of institutions and treaties that are part of it.

These six developments are not incidental or temporary. They are structural and interconnected. All signs point in the wrong direction. We are trapped in a system crisis. The system crisis cannot be solved with purely technocratic instruments, such as geo-engineering, artificial intelligence, or genetic modification of agricultural crops.

2025 has the potential to be a turning point for humanity. The cooperative movement can be a large part of the positive direction that the world could take. It can show the way out of the system crisis. The 2025–2030 era is our golden opportunity as a global movement to deliver on globalization from below; a proven cooperative practice through tangible interventions via the cooperative enterprise model and a growing group of dedicated members that deserve a large share in the global economy and society at large.

Chapter 2

Opportunity and Responsibility

Emerging Opportunities for the Cooperative Movement

As we build on the foundations laid in 2020, the global environment has shifted as set out in Chapter 1, bringing new opportunities alongside evolving challenges. By embracing positive trends and adapting to change, cooperatives have the unique potential to lead, innovate, and inspire in this dynamic landscape.

1. Building Peace by Restoring Trust in Governance

In an era of prolific wars, linked to shrinking civic space and growing repression for women and minorities in particular, and general skepticism toward institutions, cooperatives have a chance to lead by example, as they have during the challenging decades of the 19th and the 20th centuries. By prioritizing transparency, accountability, and ethical governance, cooperatives can rebuild trust within their communities, advocate peace by demonstrating that collective governance can be a force for good. Through collaboration and inclusive practices, and friendships beyond boundaries, cooperatives can be agents of peace, hope, security, and inclusion in a world that increasingly needs bridges, not barriers.

2. Climate Change and Environmental Sustainability

The intensifying need for climate action presents a prime opportunity for cooperatives to pioneer sustainable solutions and champion resilient, environmentally-friendly economies. By integrating climate-conscious practices and supporting communities in their transition, cooperatives, driven by the tenets of the 7th Cooperative Principle that marries democracy and sustainable development, can lead the charge towards a circular economy, and a greener and more sustainable future.

3. Building a More Equitable Society

The cooperative movement stands as a beacon for social justice and economic equity, addressing the widening gaps in wealth and opportunity. We recognize that race, ethnicity, caste, class, age, marital status, and many other factors affect people's lives. With the power to create inclusive economies, cooperatives can help ensure that all, especially marginalized communities, have pathways to prosperity for all. By championing equality with tangible governance practices, safeguarding cultural heritage and more, cooperatives can promote fairness and uplift society as a whole.

4. Gender equality

The cooperative movement, as one of the early pioneers of universal suffrage, works towards a world in which women are supported to challenge and transform the conditions of poverty, exclusion and discrimination they experience to achieve gender justice and equality. Cooperatives can proactively create a generation of new female leaders that can help shape transgenerational solidarity with benefits to all women and persons across all genders worldwide.

5. Youth Engagement and Empowerment

There is an unprecedented opportunity for cooperatives to engage and empower the youth as the next generation of cooperative leaders today! By creating meaningful work, inclusive training and leadership opportunities, cooperatives can shape a movement that resonates with youth, which fosters innovation and secures sustainability for today and tomorrow.

6. Embracing Technological Advancements

In an era marked by rapid digital transformation, technology, in particular sustainable technologies, including but not limited to digital analytics and platforms offer powerful means for cooperatives to significantly develop their operations, governance, and enhance member engagement. Leveraging AI, data analytics, and digital platforms, in a coordinated fashion, through the practice of Principle 6, cooperatives can collectively

expand their reach, propell innovation and deepen their impact in a “cooperative-way”. By bridging the digital divide, they can ensure inclusivity and access for all members in the digital age of today as well as of the future. As a decentralized, yet united digital front, cooperatives are uniquely positioned to democratize digital access.

7. Financial Resilience and Community Stability

Amid economic uncertainty, cooperatives have a unique opportunity to offer resilient, community-focused financial solutions. By providing stability and security, they can safeguard local economies and support communities through uncertain times, helping to mitigate the impacts of economic fluctuations. Sector specific solutions for finance founded on cooperative principles can accelerate the growth of cooperative capital that is autonomous and independent of and unwarranted external influence, monitoring and control.

8. Advocating for Supportive Legal Frameworks

Cooperative legislation is advancing worldwide. It is seen to enshrine the cooperative values and principles, of which the ICA operates as the international custodian of the principles and ensures that inter/national laws governing cooperatives – including those related to taxation, competition, public-procurement, labour & employment, and technology etc. – do respect the special character of the cooperative enterprise. Cooperatives are bound to serve their communities better when the legal environment acknowledges, recognizes and appreciates the distinctive characteristics of the cooperative enterprise.

9. Shaping the Future of Work with Dignity

As technology rapidly reshapes the workplace and the World of Work, cooperatives can be uniquely positioned to practice, and advocate for, dignified, inclusive work and decent jobs. By supporting fair labor practices and adapting to the changing job landscape, cooperatives can help workers navigate technological transitions with security and respect, by co-

owning the means of computation, and fostering better policies, regulations and labour rights for a future where Work is always dignified.

10. Supporting Food Security and Sustainable Agriculture

With rising global food demands, cooperatives have a critical role in advancing food security and by both horizontally and/or vertically integrating supply chains. By promoting sustainable agricultural practices, cooperatives can improve access to nutritious food while protecting the environment, ensuring a healthy future for all.

11. Expanding Access to Essential Services

The cooperative model is pivotal in providing equitable access to education, healthy food, renewable energy, affordable finance, healthcare, housing, and sustainable technology. By bridging gaps in access to these fundamental goods and services, cooperatives can foster healthier, more educated communities rooted in the ambition of shared prosperity where everyone has the opportunity to thrive.

These emerging opportunities highlight the cooperative movement's potential and responsibility given their uniquely structured governance systems and proven track record during various parts of the 19th to the 21st century respectively, to build alternative pathways to bring people out from humanity's system crises. Cooperatives can mobilize capacity to drive positive change, adapt to global trends, prepare for uncertainties, remain flexible and leverage new solutions for a more equitable, sustainable world.

Chapter 3
**ICA Key
Themes**

Expanding on the 5 Key Themes of the ICA New Delhi Action Agenda 2024

The ICA Strategy ultimately supports the growth and development of the cooperative movement globally, making **each cooperative enterprise its primary beneficiary**. A major indicator is a well-measured growing share of the cooperatives and mutuals in the local and the global economy. Thus, practicing, promoting and protecting Cooperative Identity Statement and its parts, and empowering the global community of cooperators, lies at the very core of every aspect of the Strategy.

As we look towards the future, this strategy draws inspiration from the consensus achieved by the ICA Global Cooperative Conference 2024 that launched the United Nations International Year of Cooperatives 2025. The consensus document, entitled, the New Delhi Action Agenda for a Cooperative Future, is founded on 5 key themes that are critical to ensuring that cooperatives remain at the forefront of global change, driving innovation, equity, and resilience across communities worldwide. Each theme is a cornerstone in building a better world for all.

1. Shaping a Just, Equal, and Resilient Future

At the heart of our movement is the commitment to grow the cooperative share in the global economy through international coordination. This needs to be done via improved competitiveness and a clear coo-growth strategy of various sectors, and also via tackling inequality and strengthening communities that have

been marginalized in the global economy. Our focus is on understanding the unique needs of local membership communities, particularly those that are vulnerable. By supporting these communities, in particular with women as future leaders, we can facilitate the changes needed to build a future that is not only more resilient but also more equitable and just. In addition, changes are needed to bring youth and other under-represented groups. Cooperatives have the power to create lasting, positive impacts by fostering economic inclusion, social justice, and environmental stewardship, thereby ensuring that no one is left behind.

2. Enabling Policy and Entrepreneurial Ecosystems

For cooperatives to thrive and fulfill their potential, they need an enabling environment that supports their growth and sustainability. We are dedicated to promoting the cooperative enterprise model to policymakers, governments, international organizations, and the public. By structuring result-oriented advocacy for policies that recognize and enhance the unique business case of cooperatives, we aim to create more space for cooperatives within society at large. Our efforts include highlighting the capacity of cooperatives to address pressing social and environmental issues, showcasing their role as vehicles for positive change in both local and global contexts.

3. Reaffirming the Cooperative Identity

In a rapidly changing world, it is crucial to reaffirm and deepen our understanding of what it means to be a cooperative, as well as be alert of any attempts that

try passing off as cooperatives. The awareness and practice of the Statement on the Cooperative Identity, which has guided us for decades, must be deepened to help cooperators and cooperatives effectively meet and respond to the current challenges facing cooperatives and communities around the world. This theme is about ensuring that our identity remains relevant and resonant, while also preserving the core values and principles that define us. By reaffirming our cooperative identity, we strengthen our resolve to act as a unified movement, committed to cooperation, solidarity, and concern for others.

4. Nurturing Purposeful Leadership

The future of the cooperative movement depends on nurturing the next generation of leaders – those who can carry forward our values and drive our mission in new and innovative ways. We are committed to supporting young people, and high-potential leaders – in particular women – from within and outside the movement, as well as youth and other under-represented groups. By building ambition and fostering lifelong learning, we aim to equip everyone with the skills and knowledge they need to succeed in a changing world. Purposeful leadership is not just about individual achievement but about cultivating a collective vision for a better future, one that is inclusive, sustainable, and driven by the cooperative identity.

5. Securing Access to Smart Financial Solutions

Financial resources are essential for the development, growth and sustainability of cooperatives. However,

access to these resources has often been limited, particularly in dormant capital markets. Our goal is to unlock these financial opportunities and connect cooperatives with the funding they need to thrive. By continuing the tradition of relationship based banking & finance, and securing access to smart financial solutions and innovation – FinTech – that complement the continuity of the local rootedness cooperative finance, we can help cooperatives scale their impact, expand their reach, and contribute more effectively to the global economy. This theme underscores our commitment to financial inclusion and the belief that cooperatives can and should have the tools they need to build strong, resilient businesses that benefit their members and communities.

These five themes will be revisited throughout our strategic plan to ensure that our efforts remain aligned with our mission and that we continue to focus on the areas that matter most for the future of the cooperative movement and of building a better future for the planet. As we navigate the challenges and opportunities ahead, these themes will guide our actions, inspire our initiatives, and help us build a cooperative future that is just, equal, and resilient for all.

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The Alpha and the Omega: Our Identity and Our Vision for Growth

At the heart of the cooperative movement lies the Statement on the Cooperative Identity—our shared definition, values, and principles that distinguish cooperatives from all other business models. These principles form the Alpha of this strategy, the foundation upon which all our efforts are built. They guide how cooperatives operate, how they engage with members and communities, and how they contribute to a fairer, more democratic global economy.

However, our vision extends beyond maintaining our identity. The Omega, the ultimate outcome of this strategy, is to increase the cooperative share in the global economy. Cooperatives must not only survive but thrive—scaling their impact, expanding their presence in key industries, and demonstrating that the cooperative model is a competitive, sustainable, and effective way of doing business.

By grounding our efforts in cooperative identity while setting ambitious goals for growth, this strategy ensures that cooperatives do not remain on the margins of the global economy but become a driving force within it.



Chapter 4
**What
Success
Looks Like**

ICA Strategic Objectives (2026–2030): What Success Looks Like

The cross-sectoral, multi-thematic, and inter-regional discussions on the ICA's strategic direction have led to the identification of **five key strategic objectives** that will drive the cooperative movement forward. These objectives focus on areas where significant improvement is needed—both in terms of quantity and quality—to achieve the alpha (reason-to-be) and omega (outcome) of the ICA Strategy 2026–2030.

Rather than being standalone goals, these strategic objectives form a continuous cycle, reinforcing and building upon one another to sustain long-term impact. The cycle begins with **Building Awareness**, which fuels greater **Engagement & Participation**. This, in turn, drives **Capacity & Innovation**, leading to stronger **Impact & Influence** that enables cooperatives to **Expand and Sustain**. This expansion creates new opportunities to further awareness, continuing the cycle and ensuring the ongoing growth and resilience of the cooperative movement.

These objectives, developed through the insights of ICA sectors, regions, thematic committees, and the global office, serve as the foundation for our collective efforts. Additionally, these objectives are closely aligned with the **United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)**, ensuring that the cooperative movement contributes meaningfully to global development. Each objective directly supports specific SDGs, reinforcing cooperatives' role in fostering sustainable economic, social, and environmental progress.



1. **Building Awareness and Membership Growth**

For cooperatives to thrive, we must **increase global awareness and affinity** for the cooperative model—both within the movement and among the broader public. This means creating stronger recognition of cooperative values, principles, and successes, while also ensuring that cooperatives are the **preferred enterprise model** for people seeking to meet their common needs and aspirations. Strengthening **both internal engagement and external visibility** will help grow cooperative membership, ensuring that more people **choose cooperation as their path to economic and social empowerment**.

Contribution to the SDGs: ICA will deliver on **SDG 4** (Quality Education), **SDG 8** (Decent Work and Economic Growth), and **SDG 9** (Industry, Innovation, and Infrastructure) by stimulating cooperative education, job creation, and sustainable business growth.



2. **Promoting Inclusive Opportunities in Cooperatives**

Cooperatives must be at the forefront of creating **inclusive opportunities**—ensuring that people of all backgrounds, identities, and circumstances can fully participate in and benefit from cooperative enterprises. This means strengthening diversity, equity, and inclusion at all levels, from membership and leadership to governance and economic participation. A key priority of this objective is **promoting gender equality** and **empowering underrepresented groups, including youth**, through cooperatives. By providing equitable

access to leadership opportunities, resources, and economic participation, cooperatives can drive meaningful social and economic progress. By enhancing the **inclusivity quotient** of the cooperative movement, we ensure that cooperatives remain a **model of shared prosperity and economic democracy**.

Contribution to the SDGs: ICA will deliver on **SDG 4** (Quality Education), **SDG 5** (Gender Equality), and **SDG 10** (Reduced Inequalities) by ensuring inclusive education, gender-equitable leadership, and economic participation within cooperatives.



3. Enabling Regulation and Policy Recognition

For cooperatives to fully realize their potential, they need an enabling policy and regulatory environment. This objective focuses on increasing the **recognition of cooperatives** by **multilateral institutions, regulators, policymakers, and civil society**. Advocating for cooperative-friendly legal frameworks and policies will ensure that cooperatives are given the space, support, and legitimacy they need to grow and compete on a **level playing field**.

Contribution to the SDGs: ICA will deliver on **SDG 4** (Quality Education), **SDG 8** (Decent Work and Economic Growth), **SDG 9** (Industry, Innovation, and Infrastructure), **SDG 11** (Sustainable Cities and Communities), **SDG 16** (Peace, Justice, and Strong Institutions), and **SDG 17** (Partnerships for the Goals) by ensuring policy frameworks that foster cooperative resilience and fair economic practices.



4. Strengthening Cooperative Networks and Cooperation

A thriving cooperative movement depends on strong networks and collaboration. Cooperatives must deepen their engagement at national, regional, and global levels, increasing their affiliation with national cooperative networks and the ICA. At the same time, they must strengthen intra-cooperative engagement—fostering partnerships and cooperation across sectors, borders, and supply chains. By reinforcing cooperative networks and cooperation, we build a more resilient, interconnected, and influential movement that can learn from each other.

Contribution to the SDGs: ICA will deliver on **SDG 1** (No Poverty), **SDG 2** (Zero Hunger), **SDG 12** (Responsible Consumption and Production), and **SDG 17** (Partnerships for the Goals) by strengthening cooperative networks that enhance economic stability, food security, and responsible production practices.

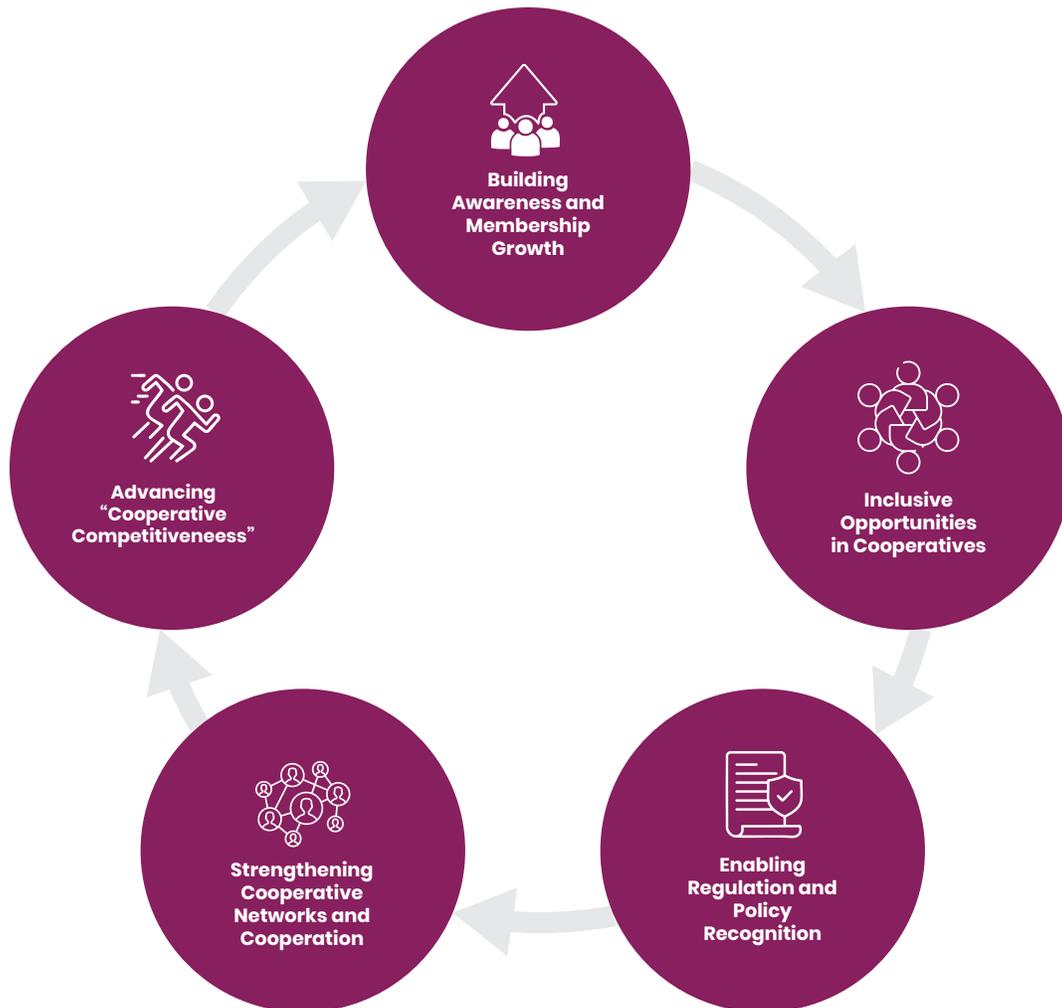


5. Advancing “Cooperative Competitiveness”

Cooperatives must not only exist—they must **thrive in the marketplace**, secure the communities they operate in from any kinds of shocks, and stand out as innovative, competitive enterprises that evidence multi-dimensional positive impact and benefits to the communities they operate in. This requires better **tools, technology, education, research, leadership development, and benchmarking** along with a seamless exchange of the knowledge so developed, to ensure cooperatives are positioned to succeed in an evolving economic landscape. By equipping cooperatives with the knowledge, skills, and digital capabilities needed to compete, we ensure that the cooperative movement remains **strong, sustainable, and forward-thinking**.

Contribution to the SDGs: ICA will deliver on **all 17 SDGs** by ensuring that cooperatives contribute across economic, social, and environmental dimensions, creating a holistic impact on sustainable development.

These five strategic objectives form the backbone of the ICA's 2026–2030 Strategy, ensuring that cooperatives are **inclusive, well-connected, recognized, competitive, and growing**. Achieving these objectives will require the collective commitment of cooperatives worldwide—**working together as one movement, with one strategy, and one organization**.



Chapter 5
**Delivering
Solutions**

How ICA Delivers Solutions to Global Challenges

1. How ICA Delivers on the SDGs

The cooperative model is inherently aligned with the principle of Sustainable Development, of which the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) are a manifestation. This makes cooperatives a powerful driver for achieving global sustainability and equity. ICA's 2030 strategy is built upon these principles, ensuring that cooperatives are:

- **Inclusive and Equitable:** Cooperatives provide fair economic opportunities, reducing inequalities in access to wealth, leadership, and education.
- **Sustainable and Responsible:** Cooperatives foster responsible consumption, production, and long-term economic resilience, directly impacting sustainable development.
- **A Catalyst for Change:** Through policy advocacy, education, research and cooperative networks, ICA is ensuring that the cooperative movement contribute meaningfully to all 17 SDGs .

2. How ICA Strengthens Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) in the Cooperative Movement

ICA is committed to fostering a cooperative movement that reflects the diversity of its members and ensures equitable opportunities for all. The 2030 strategy prioritizes strengthening inclusive leadership and working with stakeholders to promote cooperatives as people-centered enterprises that build more inclusive economies. ICA recognizes that inclusion extends beyond gender and youth to encompass all forms of

diversity, including race, ethnicity, disability, and socio-economic background.

Key Actions for Strengthening DEI in the Cooperative Movement:

- **Promoting Inclusive Leadership:** Expanding programs that increase representation of underrepresented groups—including women, youth, and marginalized communities—in cooperative leadership and governance.
- **Equitable Economic Participation:** Ensuring that cooperative financing and investment models are accessible and beneficial to diverse cooperative members, particularly those facing systemic barriers.
- **Education and Training for All:** Providing learning programs tailored to diverse populations to equip them with the knowledge and skills necessary to lead, innovate, and contribute to cooperative enterprises.
- **Youth and Next-Generation Empowerment:** Expanding mentorship, leadership training, and entrepreneurship opportunities specifically for young people to ensure intergenerational continuity and cooperative sustainability.
- **Policy Advocacy for Equity:** Partnering with global organizations to advance legal and regulatory frameworks that protect and promote DEI principles within the cooperative movement.

The 2026–2030 ICA strategy is not just about strengthening cooperatives—it's about ensuring that cooperatives are inclusive, representative, and accessible to all. Achieving

SDGs, advancing DEI, and empowering the next generation requires collective action. Cooperatives are uniquely positioned to lead the way in creating a more just, equitable, and sustainable world.

These strategic objectives form the backbone of ICA's mission, ensuring that cooperatives are inclusive, well-connected, recognized, competitive, and growing. Achieving these objectives will require the collective commitment of cooperatives worldwide—working together as one movement, with one strategy, and one organization.

Chapter 6
**The ICA
Theory
of Change**

Introduction to Our Theory of Change

Working with a Theory of Change helps us to define transformation paths towards the envisioned sustainable growth of the cooperative sector. The assumption is that we match continuity paths with innovation paths from the awareness that the ICA bundles – in its rich history and the vibrant diversity over sectors, regions, cultures and themes – in one organization, with one strategy using one brand experience. A loose ICA, is a lost ICA, and that is why we need a bundled effort.

Continuity is the further scaling, quality raising and effectiveness-building of our current work streams on inclusivity, gender equality, policy, advocacy, legislation, education & information, promotion of sustainable development and achieving endorsements and recognition. Innovation is the long-term ambition to bundle market-based software solutions with preferred developers and implementing partners that not only reaches out to ICA members, but also has the prospect of delivering additional services through the members towards cooperatives worldwide. A 'coop cloud' as a membership portal under ICA can deliver functional tools to improve social, business, environmental and financial acumen of cooperatives of all sorts, gradually creating our own in-house Big Cooperative Data center.

Our Theory of Change serves as a roadmap for achieving the transformative goals of the cooperative movement through targeted, strategic interventions. This approach begins with **Intervention Initiatives**—groups of projects designed to drive change within specific focus areas.

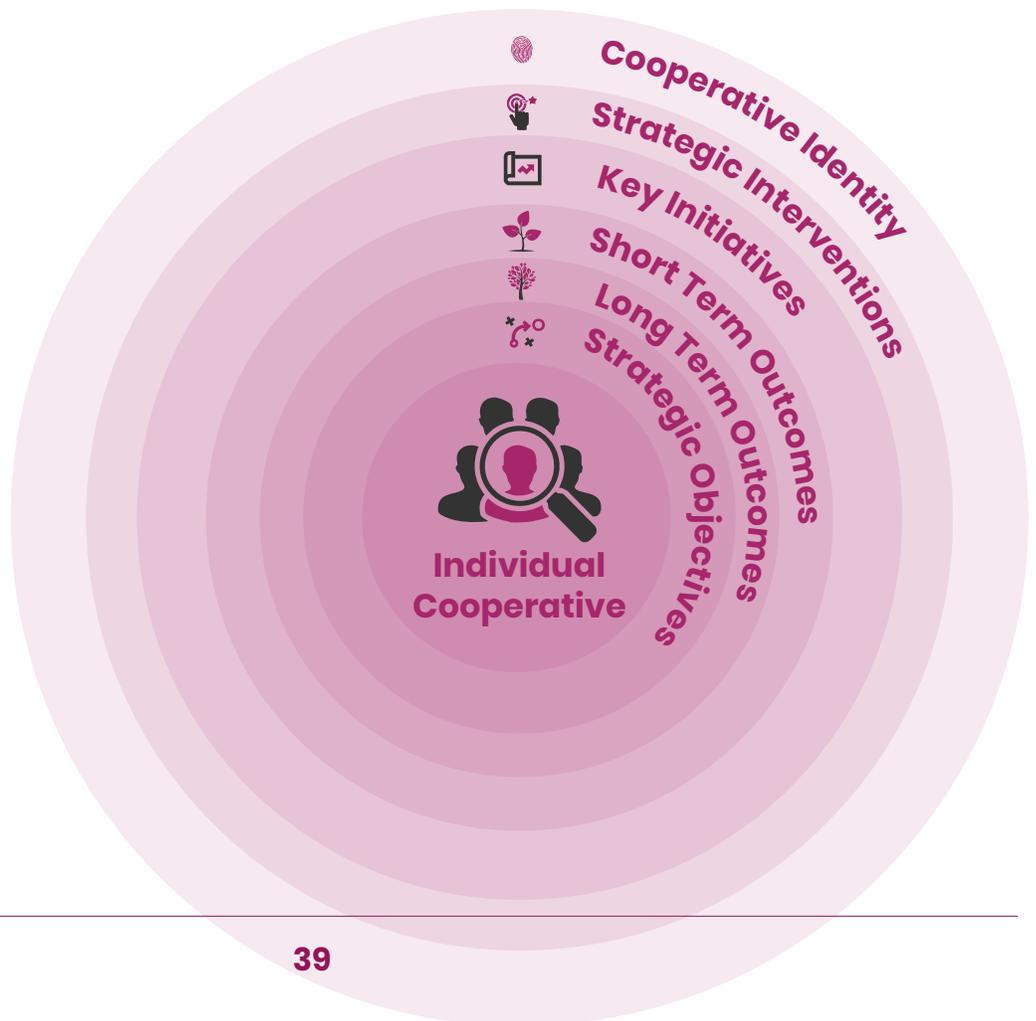
Each initiative is crafted to address key cooperative needs and align with our overarching strategic objectives.

The Theory of Change then outlines anticipated outcomes over two timelines: **Short Term Outcomes (2030)**, capturing immediate impacts from our interventions, and **Long Term Outcomes (2035 and beyond)**, defining the sustained impact on the cooperative ecosystem and its broader influence.

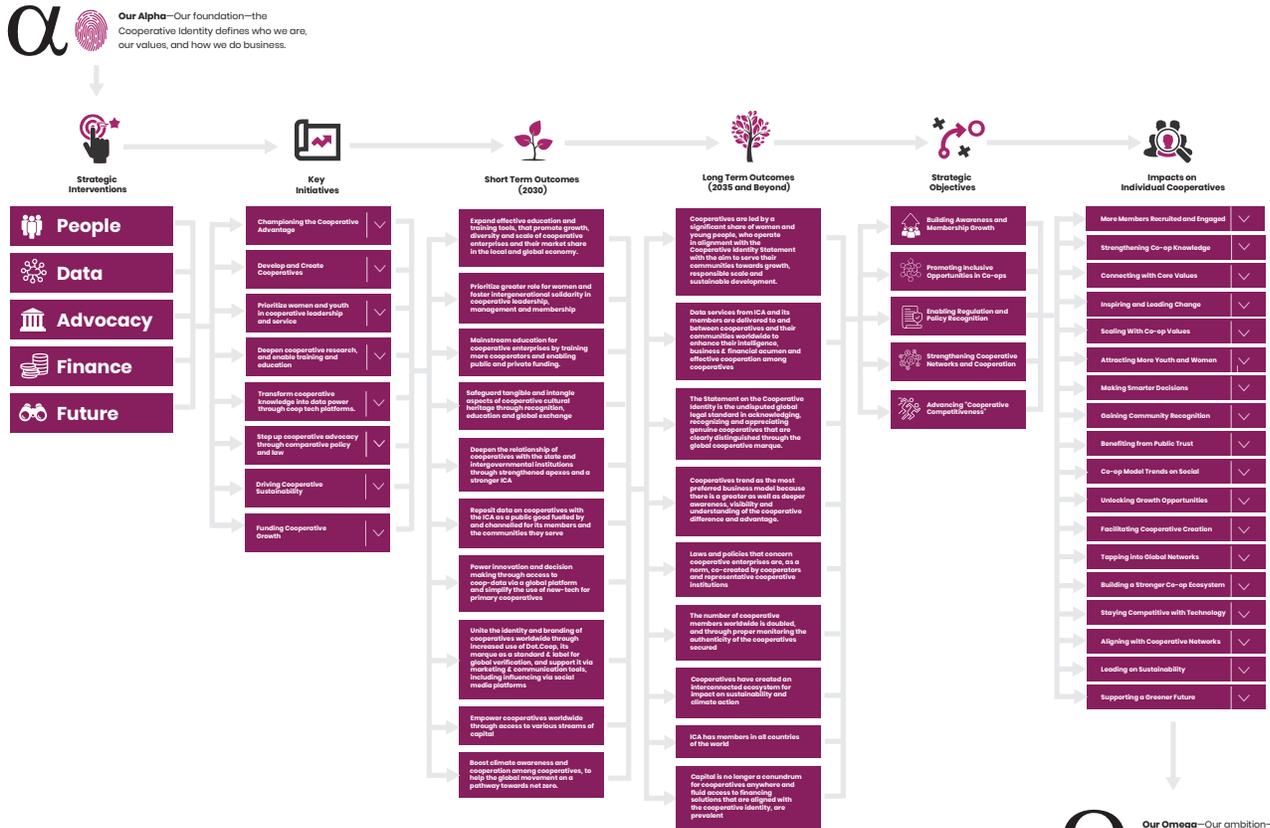
The final component in our Theory of Change is the **Impact on Individual Cooperatives Worldwide**. This ensures that each intervention is grounded in the practical needs of cooperatives, enabling them to benefit from these efforts.

The Theory of Change graphic on our website also allows users to explore these components through five key themes—**policy, leadership, identity, future, and financing**—providing a clear and dynamic view of how each initiative contributes to our strategic vision.

ICA Theory of Change Structure



ICA Theory of Change



Our Omega—Our ambition—cooperatives will increase their share of the global economy while ensuring prosperity for all.

The Elements:



The Cooperative Identity—The foundation of all strategic and tactical actions, ensuring that every initiative aligns with cooperative values and principles.



Strategic Interventions—Groups of initiatives designed to drive transformative change within specific focus areas that address key cooperative needs.



Key Initiatives—Targeted clusters of projects that further an intervention's goals, driving measurable impact within the cooperative ecosystem.



Impact on Individual Cooperatives—The success of this strategic plan is measured by its ability to strengthen individual cooperatives—enhancing their sustainability, competitiveness, and impact. Every initiative and intervention is designed with the cooperative enterprise at its center, ensuring that the plan drives real-world improvements in governance, operational effectiveness, and economic resilience. The ultimate goal is to expand the cooperative sector's share of the global economy while increasing prosperity for all.



Short Term Outcomes (2030)—The immediate, tangible impacts from our interventions that can be achieved by 2030.



Long Term Outcomes (2035 and Beyond)—The sustained, systemic changes that shape the cooperative ecosystem and its broader influence over time.



Strategic Objectives—The overarching directional goals that guide and connect our interventions and initiatives toward cooperative success.



[Interactive Theory of Change](#)

Chapter 7
**Strategy
Meets
Action**

Strategic Interventions: A Framework for Action

In order to effectively implement ICA's strategic objectives, our key initiatives have been organized under five Strategic Interventions. These interventions serve as overarching themes that guide our initiatives, ensuring that our approach is both structured and impactful. Each intervention provides a framework for aligning cooperative action with our broader mission of strengthening the global cooperative movement.



The Five Strategic Interventions are:



People: Strengthening cooperative leadership, inclusivity, and education to ensure diverse participation and long-term sustainability.



Data: Building a strong cooperative knowledge base through research, data collection & reception, education and knowledge-sharing to drive decision-making and advocacy.



Advocacy: Enhancing legal frameworks, policy influence, and cooperative identity protection to create an enabling environment for cooperative awareness and growth.



Finance: Expanding access to cooperative financing, investment opportunities, and sustainable funding models to support cooperative growth and resilience.



Future: Innovating for tomorrow by integrating technology, digital transformation, and emerging cooperative business models into our strategic approach.

These Strategic Interventions provide a structured approach to implementation, ensuring that all initiatives contribute meaningfully to ICA's mission. By adopting this framework, ICA and its partners can work cohesively to drive tangible outcomes that strengthen the cooperative movement, enhance economic participation, and address global challenges.



Key Initiatives: Building the Foundations for Cooperative Transformation

At the heart of our Theory of Change are the **Intervention Initiatives**—a series of strategic projects designed to address the core needs and opportunities within the cooperative movement. Each intervention is a focused area of action, created to drive meaningful change by harnessing cooperative strengths, overcoming shared challenges, and embracing new possibilities.

These initiatives serve as the building blocks of our strategic plan, providing cooperatives with the tools, resources, and frameworks needed to thrive in an evolving global landscape. Each intervention is supported by key partners across the cooperative ecosystem, fostering collaboration that extends beyond individual projects to create a ripple effect of positive impact.

From advancing data-driven insights and sustainable practices to fostering leadership and education, each intervention plays a distinct role in achieving the short- and long-term outcomes outlined in our Theory of Change. Together, they lay the groundwork for a resilient, inclusive, and future-ready cooperative movement that can rise to meet the challenges and opportunities of our time.



1. **Championing the Cooperative Advantage Initiative (Future)**

Strategic Objectives:

- Cooperative Networks and Cooperation
- Awareness and Membership Growth
- Greater Enabling Regulation

This initiative **strengthens the cooperative brand and global recognition** through evidence based storytelling, branding, and communication strategies. A core aspect of this initiative is showcasing the role cooperatives play in promoting gender equality and youth empowerment. Marketing materials and awareness campaigns will feature stories of women and young people leading and thriving in cooperatives, reinforcing the cooperative model as an inclusive and forward-thinking enterprise approach.

Projects:

- Develop customizable marketing materials and an identity kit
- Create a cooperative stories database and communication plan
- Launch the International Year of the Cooperative campaign
- Expand the Dot Coop domain
- Reaffirm the Statement of Cooperative Identity
- Establish a global cooperative certification label

Potential Partners:

- ICA
- Cooperatives and Mutuals 50 (CM50.coop)
- ICA Regions and Sectoral Organizations
- Individual cooperatives and members



2. Develop and Create Cooperatives Initiative (Future)

Strategic Objectives:

- Awareness and Membership Growth

This initiative supports the **creation of new cooperatives and entrepreneurial development** by providing resources, mentorship, and digital tools. Special emphasis will be placed on developing cooperatives led by women, as well as youth and other under-represented groups, ensuring they have the resources, mentorship, and support needed to succeed. This initiative will actively promote gender and youth representation in cooperative entrepreneurship and governance.

Projects:

- Develop coordinated solutions to create and support new cooperatives
- Assess existing mentorship programs
- Explore global development financial investment mechanisms
- Create a Coop AI Chatbot for cooperative development

Potential Partners:

- Cooperative incubators
- International Cooperative Entrepreneurship Think Tank (ICETT): DotCoop, The Label, The Principle 6 Cooperative (P6), Coop. Exchange, and CM50.coop
- Apex cooperative federations
- ITC, UNIDO



3. Prioritize Women and Youth in Cooperative Leadership & Services

Strategic Objectives:

- Inclusive Opportunities in Cooperatives
- Cooperative-Competitiveness

This initiative focuses on **ensuring that women and youth have equitable access to leadership and services within the cooperative movement.** By fostering leadership development, mentorship, and training programs specifically tailored to underrepresented groups, ICA aims to cultivate the next generation of diverse and inclusive cooperative leaders. Cooperative services will also be expanded to better serve the needs of women and young people, ensuring that cooperatives remain **accessible, relevant, and inclusive.**

Key Goals:

- **Developing Women and Youth in Leadership:** Establishing pathways for women and young people to enter and excel in cooperative leadership roles.
- **Strengthening Cooperative Services for Underrepresented Groups:** Expanding cooperative programs and services that address the needs of women, youth, and marginalized communities.
- **Building a Culture of Inclusive Leadership:** Equipping cooperatives with the tools and resources necessary to foster diverse leadership at all levels.
- **Promoting Economic Empowerment:** Ensuring equitable access to cooperative financing and business development opportunities.

Key Projects:

- Create a **masterclass for cooperative leadership** with a dedicated focus on women and youth.

- Support cooperatives in **scaling and expanding operations** with an emphasis on inclusion.
- Develop **cooperative heritage sites** to highlight diverse cooperative histories and achievements.
- Establish a **cooperative learning platform** that provides mentorship and skills development for underrepresented leaders.

Potential Partners:

- ICA Working Group on Cultural Heritage
- ICA Thematic Committees
- Universities with cooperative studies programs
- Cooperative incubators

By prioritizing women and youth in cooperative leadership and services, this initiative strengthens the long-term sustainability and inclusivity of the cooperative movement. ICA remains committed to **empowering diverse leaders and fostering equitable opportunities within cooperatives worldwide.**



4. Deepen Cooperative Research and Enable Training, and Education Initiative (People)

Strategic Objectives:

- Cooperative Networks and Cooperation
- Awareness and Membership Growth

This initiative **strengthens cooperative education and research** through curriculum development, cooperative heritage preservation, and training programs, as well as building an understanding about how cooperatives interact with other actors, especially outside their own ecosystems. The strategic initiative will work to ensure that gender equality and inclusion of youth and other under-represented groups, are embedded in cooperative education. Training programs will focus on increasing the participation of women and youth in cooperatives, with dedicated resources aimed at breaking down barriers to engagement. Further, this will also guide efforts to include cooperatives in public educational institutions.

Projects:

- Create and distribute cooperative curriculum to educational institutions
- Build a global map of cooperative heritage sites
- Advocate for government implementation of ILO resolutions on cooperatives
- Establish ICA Campus and Global Coop Erasmus
- Preserve and organize ICA archives

Potential Partners:

- Cooperative universities (Mondragon, St. Mary's, etc.)
- Cooperative Development Organizations (CDOs)
- United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) and government bodies
- ICETT (DotCoop, The Label, P6, Coop.Exchange, and CM50.coop)



5. Transform Cooperative Knowledge into Data Power Through Coop-Tech Platforms (Data)

Strategic Objectives:

- Cooperative Networks and Cooperation
- Awareness and Membership Growth
- Greater Enabling Regulation
- Cooperative-Competitiveness

This initiative consolidates efforts to harness cooperative knowledge, digital engagement, and data-driven strategies to build a stronger and more interconnected cooperative movement. By leveraging **future tech platforms**, we will integrate data collection, research, and digital collaboration tools to enhance cooperative education, governance, engagement, policy, engagement and decision making.

Projects:

- Design and implement cooperative data collection protocols.
- Develop case studies and materials to showcase cooperative success.
- Map cooperative research initiatives and enabling regulation globally.
- Consolidate cooperative knowledge, data, and research into a centralized repository.
- Develop a **Global Cooperative Supply Chain & Resource Platform** to connect cooperatives.
- Digitize best practices for cooperative governance, procedures, and policies.
- Create a universal cooperative data structure to standardize reporting and transparency.

- Facilitate the development of **data cooperatives** to enhance sector-wide intelligence.
- Launch a **Coop AI Chatbot** to provide instant access to cooperative data and resources.

Potential Partners:

- ICA Sectors & Regions
- Committee on Cooperative Research (CCR) / Law Committee
- ICETT (DotCoop, The Label, P6, Coop.Exchange, and CM50.coop)
- Civil society networks and research entities
- Sectoral federations
- Digital platform cooperatives
- Platform Cooperative Consortium
- ICA Apex Bodies and Federations



6. Step Up Cooperative Advocacy Through Comparative Policy and Law (Advocacy)

Strategic Objectives:

- Greater Enabling Regulation

With a focus on **policy influence and legal frameworks**, this initiative strengthens the cooperative movement's voice within legislative and regulatory arenas. By mapping cooperative laws and forming strategic partnerships, this initiative positions cooperatives as leaders in advocacy.

Cooperative principles, of which the ICA has been the global custodian since 1895, are increasingly getting enshrined in inter/national law. This reality is among the first instances of successful “law-making” by a Non-Governmental Organization, and for this, the membership and leadership of the ICA, particularly of the 20th century, must be credited. A major legislative landmark for cooperatives in the 21st century was the inclusion of this “NGO-made set of norms” into the legal text of the ILO Promotion of Cooperatives Recommendation (No. 193) in 2002. Successive reports of the UN Secretary General on cooperatives have called on member states to review and revise their cooperative laws in line with the Statement on the Cooperative Identity (definition, values and principles) thus attributing a special status to the unique features of the cooperative enterprise as well as the rights & responsibilities of co-operators that must be safeguarded in and by the law. It is now becoming an increasingly valid argument, that the cooperative principles, which began as practices by different cooperative traditions in the 19th century and harmonized to some extent by the ICA through the 20th century, have become an important source of law and part of customary international law according to Art. 38.1.c of the Statute of the International Court of Justice.

It is the perennial responsibility of the ICA and its member organizations to not just advocate for adequate legal and policy frameworks for cooperatives, but also ensure cooperatives comply within frameworks that translate the cooperative values and principles into legal rules and public policy. The most important reason for this is the legal obligation that the ICA has, by virtue of its creation through its Articles of Association, under the laws of the Kingdom of Belgium to ensure its member organizations act in a manner consistent with the Statement on the Cooperative Identity.

With a focus on policy influence, this intervention aims to strengthen the cooperative movement's voice within legislative and regulatory arenas. By mapping relevant laws and building strategic partnerships, this initiative positions cooperatives as advocates for supportive policies, ensuring they have the backing needed to thrive in diverse legal environments.

Projects:

- Utilize technology solutions to enhance cooperative law
- Build partnerships with institutions and legislative bodies
- Map environmental legislation related to cooperatives
- Establish a policy coordination committee

Potential Partners:

- ICA Legislation Committee
- ICA CCR
- UN Committee on the Promotion and Advancement of Cooperatives, International Labour Organization (ILO), International Court of Justice (ICJ)
- European Commission & Directorate-General for International Partnerships (DG INTPA)
- Partners such as Fairtrade and International Trade Union Confederation



7. Driving Cooperative Sustainability (Advocacy)

Strategic Objectives:

- Inclusive Opportunities in Cooperatives
- Greater Enabling Regulation
- Cooperative-Competitiveness

This initiative defines, monitors and **measures cooperative contributions to environmental SDGs** and promotes sustainable business practices.

Projects:

- Develop a global understanding about cooperative sustainability indicators
- Develop a Cooperative Carbon Exchange and circular economy initiatives
- Measure cooperative impact on SDGs
- Create a best-practices library for cooperative sustainability efforts
- Secure sustainability commitments from ICA members

Potential Partners:

- ICETT: P6
- ICA member organizations with sustainability expertise
- Global partners such as Acorn/Rabobank, Solidaridad



8. Creating and Funding Cooperative Growth (Finance)

Strategic Objectives:

- Awareness and Membership Growth

This initiative expands **access to financial resources** for cooperatives through partnerships with financial institutions, ethical investment funds, and development finance institutions.

Projects:

- Build partnerships with financial organizations and development finance institutions
- Establish ICA as a financial agent for cooperative funding

Potential Partners:

- International Cooperative Banking Association (ICBA), International Cooperative and Mutual Insurance Federation (ICMIF)
- Fund for International Co-operative Development
- Global Coop Investment Fund
- World Bank Development Initiative
- International donors
- Coop.Exchange and cooperative-backed investment initiatives



Chapter 8

From Action to Impact

Impacts of the Interventions on Cooperatives

The ultimate goal of our strategic efforts is to create meaningful, lasting impacts for cooperatives around the world. Each intervention within our Theory of Change is designed with cooperatives at its heart, ensuring that the cooperative movement remains inclusive, grows stronger, more resilient, and better equipped to face the challenges and opportunities of the future.

Through our targeted initiatives, we aim to empower cooperatives with the tools, knowledge, and networks they need to thrive in a dynamic and evolving global environment. These impacts encompass improved decision-making, greater public trust, access to growth opportunities, technological advancement, and stronger alignment with cooperative values. Together, these outcomes build a foundation for cooperatives to lead the way in sustainability, attract talent, and scale without compromising their principles.

Below are the specific impacts we envision as the result of our strategic interventions, each contributing to a vibrant, sustainable, and connected global cooperative ecosystem that benefits all members and stakeholders.

- 1. More Members Recruited and Engaged:** Cooperatives experience increased membership as more individuals recognize the benefits of cooperative participation and economic democracy.
- 2. Strengthening Cooperative Knowledge:** Cooperatives gain access to enhanced research, data, and learning opportunities, equipping them with the knowledge needed to grow and innovate.

- 3. Connecting with Core Values:** Cooperatives remain rooted in their values and principles, ensuring alignment with the cooperative identity in their growth and operation.
- 4. Inspiring and Leading Change:** Cooperative leaders develop the skills to inspire their members and communities while advocating for cooperative principles and impact.
- 5. Scaling with Cooperative Values:** Cooperatives expand and scale their operations without losing sight of their core principles, ensuring sustainable and mission-driven growth.
- 6. Attracting More Youth and Women:** Cooperatives create equitable opportunities and leadership pathways for youth and women, ensuring the movement's long-term sustainability and diversity.
- 7. Making Smarter Decisions:** Access to internationally comparable cooperative-specific data and research empowers cooperatives to make informed, strategic decisions that benefit their members.
- 8. Gaining Community Recognition:** Cooperatives that uphold cooperative values and principles gain stronger recognition and credibility within their communities.
- 9. Benefiting from Public Trust:** Cooperatives gain increased trust from the public through transparency, ethical business practices, and alignment with the ICA Statement on the Cooperative Identity.
- 10. Cooperative Model Trends on Social:** Cooperatives experience increased visibility as the cooperative model gains traction across media, social platforms, and public discourse.
- 11. Unlocking Growth Opportunities:** Cooperatives can innovate and expand with access to cooperative-friendly capital, financial tools, and investment mechanisms.

- 12. Facilitating Cooperative Creation:** Creating new cooperatives by, and with the strategic facilitation of, the local cooperative movements but driven by international best practice, will be easy.
- 13. Tapping into Global Networks:** Primary cooperatives benefit from being connected to the greater cooperative ecosystem. They can easily connect with other cooperatives for trade, collaborations and general sharing of best practices.
- 14. Building a Stronger Cooperative Ecosystem:** New cooperatives will be supported with the aim of creating resilient local economies that are based on the genuine practice of ICA cooperative principles. This will elevate the cooperative ecosystem.
- 15. Staying Competitive with Technology:** Cooperatives leverage technological advancements to remain competitive, increase efficiency, and enhance member engagement.
- 16. Aligning with Cooperative Networks:** Cooperatives establish stronger connections with national and international cooperative networks, benefiting from shared resources and advocacy efforts.
- 17. Leading on Sustainability:** Cooperatives have the tools and information necessary to measure and reduce their carbon footprint, and create an environmental sustainability plan.
- 18. Supporting a Greener Future:** Cooperatives collaborate to implement sustainable practices, reinforcing their role as leaders in environmental responsibility.

Chapter 9
**Going
Local**

Regional and Sectoral Interpretations

A. Introduction to Regional and Sectoral Interpretations of the Strategic Plan

As the International Cooperative Alliance (ICA) advances its global strategic plan, it is essential to recognize the diverse needs and priorities of our regional and sectoral organizations. While the overarching themes, expected impacts, and long-term goals provide a unified direction for the cooperative movement, the specific projects and scope of goals may vary according to local contexts and sector-specific challenges.

This section of the strategic plan invites our regional and sectoral organizations to offer their interpretations and adaptations of the global strategy. Each organization will align with the ICA's broader mission and goals while tailoring their efforts to reflect the unique circumstances and opportunities within their regions or sectors. These localized versions of the strategic plan will maintain coherence with the global framework but will focus on projects that are most relevant and impactful within their specific domains.

Through these interpretations, we ensure that the global cooperative movement remains flexible and responsive, allowing each region and sector to contribute meaningfully to our collective objectives. The collaboration between the ICA and its regional and sectoral partners is vital for the successful

implementation of this strategic plan, as it allows for a more nuanced approach that respects the diversity and strengths of our global cooperative network.

In the following sections, each regional and sectoral organization will present their tailored strategic plans, highlighting how they intend to contribute to the global goals while addressing the specific needs of their members and communities. These interpretations will demonstrate the power of the cooperative model to adapt and thrive in varied contexts, ensuring that our movement continues to grow and succeed worldwide.

B. Interpreting the ICA Strategic Plan: A Guide for Sectoral, Regional, and Thematic Leaders

The purpose of this guide is to assist you, as a sectoral, regional, or thematic leader, in reviewing the ICA's strategic plan and determining where your group can make the most significant impact. We encourage you to either focus on specific goals that align with your group's strengths or provide an interpretation for all the goals. The key is to establish SMART goals (Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant, Time-bound) for both the short term (to be achieved by 2030) and the long term (to be achieved by 2035) that align with the global vision while being realistic for your context.

Steps for Developing Your Interpretation

1. Review the ICA Global Strategy

Begin by thoroughly reviewing the ICA's strategic plan. Familiarize yourself with the goals, key themes, and expected global impacts. This will give you a strong foundation for identifying the areas where your group can contribute most effectively.

2. Identify Key Goals for Your Group

Reflect on your sector, region, or thematic area and ask yourself:

- Which goals from the ICA strategy align with our strengths and mission?
- Where can we make the greatest impact, either regionally or sectorally?
- Are there specific challenges or opportunities unique to our group that could align with certain global goals?

You may choose to focus on a subset of the goals where your group can excel, or you can provide an interpretation for all goals if it aligns with your capacity.

3. Set Realistic Goals (Short Term & Long Term)

Based on your review, set short-term goals (5 years, by 2030) and long-term goals (10 years, by 2035) for your group. Ensure your goals are SMART:

- Specific: Clearly define what you want to achieve.
- Measurable: Establish concrete criteria for tracking progress and measuring success.
- Achievable: Ensure the goal is realistic given your resources and constraints.

- Relevant: Make sure the goal aligns with both the ICA's global strategy and your group's context.
- Time-bound: Set a clear timeline for when the goal will be achieved.

4. Align with the ICA's Global Strategy

Make sure the goals you set contribute to the overall mission of the ICA. Your group's efforts should align with the key global impacts identified by the ICA, such as increasing cooperative participation, fostering sustainability, and expanding cooperative access to financial resources.

5. Collaborate and Seek Input

Engage your team and stakeholders in the goal-setting process. Their insights can help ensure that the goals are not only aligned with the global strategy but also practical and relevant to your context.

Step 4: Alignment with ICA Global Strategy

How do your group's goals align with the ICA's global strategy? (Consider impacts like participation, sustainability, financial access, etc.)

ICA Impact Area	How Will Your Goal Contribute?

Step 5: Resources and Support Needed

What resources or support will you need to achieve these goals? (e.g., partnerships, funding, expertise, etc.)

ICA Goal Number:	Resources Needed	Who Can Provide Support

Practice, Promote and Protect: ICA's Strategic Plan to Empower the Future of Cooperatives (2026–2030)

The cooperative movement stands at a pivotal moment. As global challenges reshape economies and societies, cooperatives must not only adapt but lead. **ICA's Theory of Change provides a strategic roadmap to ensure cooperatives grow stronger, expand their influence, and shape a more equitable global economy.**

At the core of this strategy is our **Alpha and Omega**—our foundation and our ambition. Our **Alpha** is the **Statement on the Cooperative Identity**, which defines who we are and how we do business. But identity must translate into action. Our **Omega** is a future where **cooperatives represent a significantly larger share of the global economy while ensuring prosperity for all**. Cooperation must move from **alternative to essential—scaling from principle to power**.

A **Theory of Change** outlines the logical path from vision to impact. It identifies the strategic interventions that create conditions for success, the key initiatives that turn those interventions into action, and the short- and long-term outcomes that measure progress. By 2030, our focus is on strengthening cooperatives, shaping policy, and increasing visibility. By 2035 and beyond, our goal is systemic transformation—where cooperatives are not just participants in the economy, but leaders in building a **fairer, more sustainable world**.

As part of this strategy, ICA has evolved its original four pillars—**Participation, Sustainability, Identity, and Legal Frameworks**—into five Strategic Interventions that more directly

address the challenges and opportunities ahead. **People** drive leadership, engagement, and cooperative education, equipping members with the knowledge and skills to succeed. **Data** strengthens visibility and advocacy, ensuring cooperatives can measure and communicate their impact. **Advocacy** secures the policies and regulatory frameworks needed for cooperative success, positioning cooperatives as a central force in the global economy. **Finance** provides cooperatives with the capital, financial tools, and investment structures necessary to scale and compete in a rapidly changing world. **Future**-readiness ensures that cooperatives are prepared to lead in innovation, sustainability, and emerging economic trends.

These interventions do not stand alone—they reinforce each other. **Data fuels advocacy, finance enables future growth, people drive engagement, and advocacy creates the enabling conditions for cooperatives to expand their reach and impact.** Together, they ensure cooperatives are not only resilient but well-positioned to compete, scale, and redefine the future of business.

ICA is not just supporting cooperatives—it is **leading a transformation as a change agent**. By aligning our **Alpha**—who we are—with our **Omega**—where we need to go, we are ensuring cooperatives not only survive but become **the dominant force in shaping a fairer, more sustainable global economy**.

Together, we will practice, promote, and protect cooperation—empowering the next era of cooperative success.

The Elements:



The Cooperative Identity—The foundation of all strategic and tactical actions, ensuring that every initiative aligns with cooperative values and principles.



Strategic Interventions—Groups of initiatives designed to drive transformative change within specific focus areas that address key cooperative needs.



Key Initiatives—Targeted clusters of projects that further an intervention's goals, driving measurable impact within the cooperative ecosystem.



Impact on Individual Cooperatives—The success of this strategic plan is measured by its ability to strengthen individual cooperatives—enhancing their sustainability, competitiveness, and impact. Every initiative and intervention is designed with the cooperative enterprise at its center, ensuring that the plan drives real-world improvements in governance, operational effectiveness, and economic resilience. The ultimate goal is to expand the cooperative sector's share of the global economy while increasing prosperity for all.



Short Term Outcomes (2030)—The immediate, tangible impacts from our interventions that can be achieved by 2030.

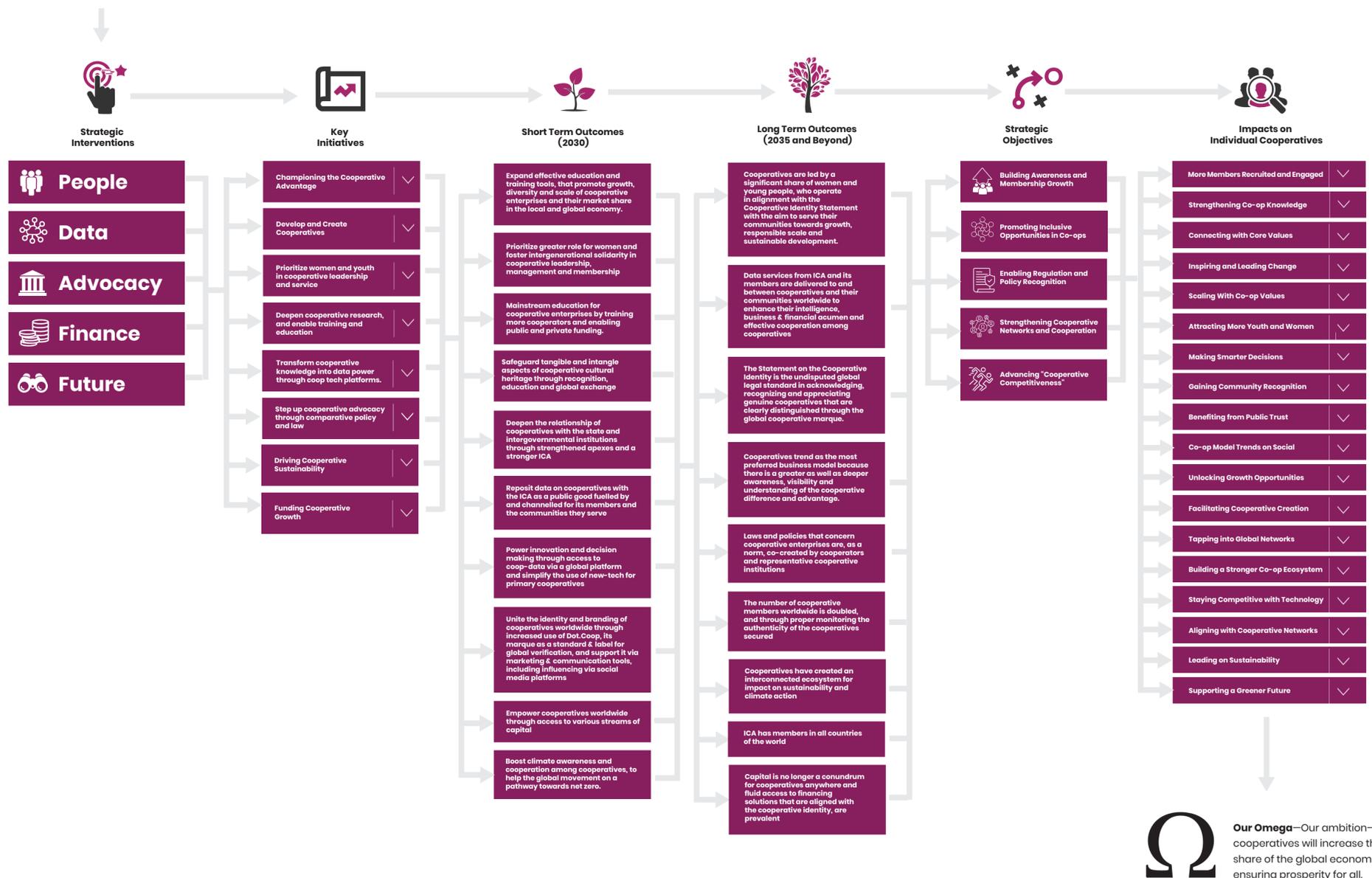


Long Term Outcomes (2035 and Beyond)—The sustained, systemic changes that shape the cooperative ecosystem and its broader influence over time.



Strategic Objectives—The overarching directional goals that guide and connect our interventions and initiatives toward cooperative success.

Our Alpha—Our foundation—the Cooperative Identity defines who we are, our values, and how we do business.





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