



Citizens **Information** Board

Strategy 2023 – 2026



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Chair and Chief Executive Officer's Foreword

In developing the Citizens Information Board's (CIB) strategy for 2023 – 2026, the Board of CIB sought to consult with stakeholders and audiences on priorities for the next three years, as well as to develop a plan that would set a broad course for the organisation over a number of strategy cycles.

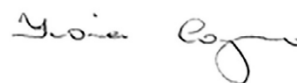
As a first step in producing a strategy, CIB commissioned an environment scan, with a 10-year horizon, to look at trends likely to have a bearing on the work of CIB and the Service Delivery Companies. The environment scan examined a wide range of areas, including demographics and politics, economic trends and developments, socioeconomic policy and digitalisation.

When consultants, BearingPoint, were contracted by CIB to support the development of our strategy, the environment scan formed the backdrop to their considerations as to how CIB should be positioned in the medium-term. A series of consultations were then carried out through interviews, workshops and surveys, allowing for input from our own staff, from the staff and boards of the Service Delivery Companies, and from the public. We would like to take the opportunity to thank everyone who took part in the consultations and who helped to shape this strategy, and in particular to thank everyone who took the time to share their views by completing the public-facing survey.

In establishing five strategic objectives – covering oversight, metrics, communications, technology and accessibility – this strategy sets out the steps CIB will take to fulfil its legislative mandate, and how the organisation plans to adapt to the challenges and opportunities of the coming years. Our goal is to continue to be a trusted source of information, advice and advocacy for everyone, and for access to those services to be as seamless as possible. Our mission statement will be our focus as we implement this strategy, that is, to enable the delivery of quality information, advice and advocacy services to the public, based on a foundation of strong governance, systems and standards. We look forward to working with our staff; the staff, boards and volunteers of the Service Delivery Companies; the Minister for Social Protection; the Department of Social Protection; and, crucially, with service users to achieve this mission.



Catherine Heaney, **Chair**



Fiona Coyne, **Chief Executive Officer**

Introduction

The Citizens Information Board supports the provision of information, advice, money advice and advocacy services the public. Established under the Comhairle Act 2000, CIB comes within the remit of the Department of Social Protection. CIB's legislative mandate includes ensuring that individuals have access to accurate, comprehensive and clear information relating to social services and providing feedback on social policy. CIB provides a number of services directly to the public, including [citizensinformation.ie](https://www.citizensinformation.ie) and [mabs.ie](https://www.mabs.ie). Other services are provided to the public by the companies funded by CIB, known as Service Delivery Companies. Currently, CIB funds twenty-two Service Delivery Companies:

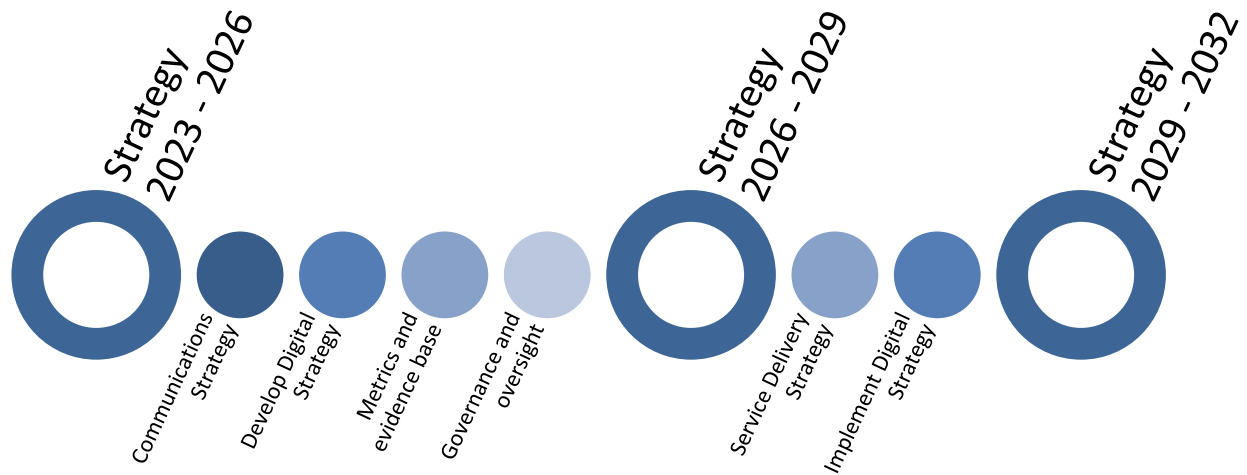
- Eight regional Citizens Information Services (CIS)
- Eight regional Money Advice and Budgeting Service (MABS)
- National Advocacy Service for people with disabilities (NAS)
- Citizens Information Phone Service (CIPS)
- MABS Support
- National Traveller MABS (NT MABS)
- Sign Language Interpreting Service (SLIS)
- Register of Sign Language Interpreters (RISLI)

CIB provides oversight and infrastructure for the Service Delivery Companies, including ICT support. In turn, the Service Delivery Companies provide frontline services, and it is their interaction with members of the public that sees CIB's legislative mandate come to life. CIB manages the formal relationship with the Service Delivery Companies through a Service Level Agreement, but the next 10 years will also see CIB co-designing services with the companies – and with users – to meet the needs of changing audiences in a changing environment.

CIB's strategy for 2023 – 2026 is part of a longer-term plan to achieve CIB's vision over the next three strategy cycles. To gain insights into developments over that timeframe, CIB commissioned an 'environment scan' to look at a wide range of areas that could impact the work of CIB and the work of the Service Delivery Companies. This environment scan put forward a number of key insights in projecting, for example, that the Irish population would continue to grow - including through migration - as well as to age overall; that inflation and interest rates would likely be higher than in the previous decade; and that Ireland's very high levels of internet access and device ownership would be reflected in the digitalisation of public services. Taking these insights on board, our goal is to be able to adapt to our changing audiences and to reflect the different and diverse groups that will access services, now and in the future. We aim to be able to meet people where they are, and to ensure that all our users can access our services as seamlessly as possible and on an equal and equitable basis.

This new strategy, covering the next three years, can be seen as a corporate strategy, a foundation that represents the first step in assessing and further developing services to ensure they remain accessible and relevant to the public. It involves establishing metrics and an evidence base for developing services. It involves communicating our work, and communicating more within our network. It involves a strong base of governance and oversight, to ensure that

we are accountable for the funding we receive and the decisions we make. As we move through this strategy, we intend to be agile in response to changes in the environment, and we will involve and collaborate with the public and Service Delivery Companies to shape fit-for-purpose services into the future.



Our Vision

An Ireland where everyone has seamless access to a trusted, independent source of information, advice and advocacy.

Our Mission

To enable the delivery of quality information, advice and advocacy services to the public, based on a foundation of strong governance, systems and standards.

Our Values



Availability

- We will support service development and delivery so that trusted information, advice and advocacy is available to the public in formats that meet their needs. In doing so, we will be strongly guided by our Public Sector Duty requirements, ensuring that those who need most support are prioritised.
- We will collaborate with the Department of Social Protection, the Service Delivery Companies, users and other organisations to design accessible, seamless services.



Sustainability

- We will consider sustainability in all of our decision making and in our ways of working, ensuring that CIB-funded services are resilient and fit-for-purpose in the long-term. Sustainability will be considered in respect of our workplace, the environment, funding, and, crucially, in how services are delivered to the public.



Accountability

- We will operate strong systems of governance and oversight to drive performance.
- We will use public funds prudently to deliver positive outcomes for the public.
- We will work with the Department of Social Protection, the Service Delivery Companies and other organisations to ensure that trusted information, advice and advocacy is available to the public in a timely and accessible way.

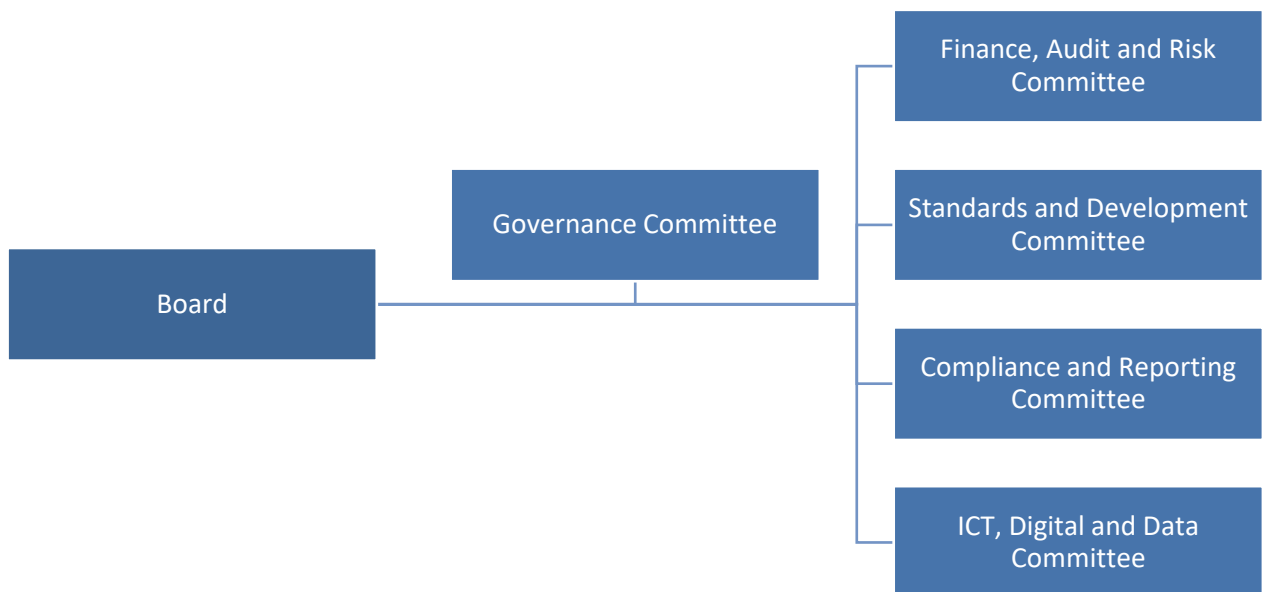
Board of CIB

CIB's Board consists of up to 15 members who are appointed by the Minister for Social Protection. The Board directs the organisation and has a number of reserved functions, including in the development of strategy, in the approval and monitoring of budgets and in the appraisal of major investments.

In January 2023, a new committee structure was put in place to mirror the division structure in CIB:





- Compliance and Reporting Committee
- Standards and Development Committee
- ICT, Digital and Data Committee
- Finance, Audit and Risk Committee

A Governance Committee has also been established, consisting of the Chair of the Board and the Chairs of the other committees.

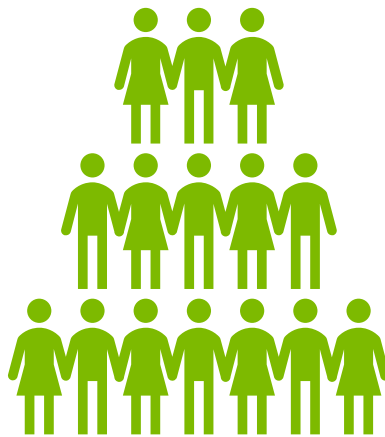


CIB Divisions

CIB is organised in four divisions. The work of CIB over the next three years will be structured under these divisions.

 <p>Division 1: Compliance and Reporting</p>	 <p>Division 2: Standards and Development</p>	 <p>Division 3: ICT, Digital and Data</p>	 <p>Division 4: Corporate Services</p>
<p>The Compliance and Reporting Division includes the Financial Compliance and Reporting team, the Operational Compliance and Reporting team and the Abhaile team.</p> <p>This division oversees governance, finance, HR and premises matters in the Service Delivery Companies.</p>	<p>The Standards and Development Division includes the Standards and Development team, the Advocacy Standards and Development team and the eLearning team.</p> <p>This division is responsible for developing standards, policies and eLearning to ensure a consistent quality approach across the Service Delivery Companies.</p>	<p>The ICT, Digital and Data Division includes the ICT team, the Data and Research team and the Digital Content team.</p> <p>This division provides the ICT infrastructure, applications and cybersecurity systems for CIB and the Service Delivery Companies.</p> <p>The division develops and maintains CIB's websites, online presence and publications, and provides social policy feedback based on data gathered.</p>	<p>The Corporate Services Division includes the Corporate Services team, the Finance team and the HR team.</p> <p>This division includes CIB's finance and HR functions, along with communications, freedom of information, data protection and administration.</p>

People



Our staff members, supported by the board of CIB, are at the core of ensuring the successful achievement of the CIB strategy.

In turn, the support of the board members, staff and volunteers of the Service Delivery Companies is essential to the successful delivery of the initiatives in this strategy.

Strategic Objectives

Several strategic objectives will guide the achievement of the CIB mission statement. These objectives cut across the services and activities of all CIB divisions.

S1

Service Accessibility & Delivery

Increase accessibility of CIB services for everyone

Objective one of the strategy aims to adapt service channels to expand access and meet the needs of service users. Initiatives under this objective include developing data insights, continuing to improve the accessibility and functionality of citizensinformation.ie, and supporting and promoting face-to-face services.

S2

Communicate & Engage

Develop communication and engagement with CIB staff, Service Delivery Companies and the public

Objective two will see CIB put in place a number of strategies, including in relation to internal and external communication and staff development. A particular emphasis will be placed on engagement between CIB and the Service Delivery Companies. It will also involve CIB exploring a role in countering misinformation and disinformation.

S3

Technology & Supports

Improve technology and supports to deliver an enhanced experience for the public

Objective three relates to CIB's ICT and digital supports. Under this objective, CIB plans to develop a digital strategy to expand the digital service provided, as well as to develop future-facing ICT infrastructure, applications and cybersecurity systems.

S4

Oversee & Collaborate

Provide oversight and agree metrics with Service Delivery Companies

Objective four relates to CIB's relationship with the Service Delivery Companies. Plans under this objective include agreeing outcome-based metrics with the Service Delivery Companies, enhancing compliance and reporting processes, assessing the scope of advocacy services, collaborating on new service design and implementing recommendations in relation to volunteers in the Citizens Information Services.

S5

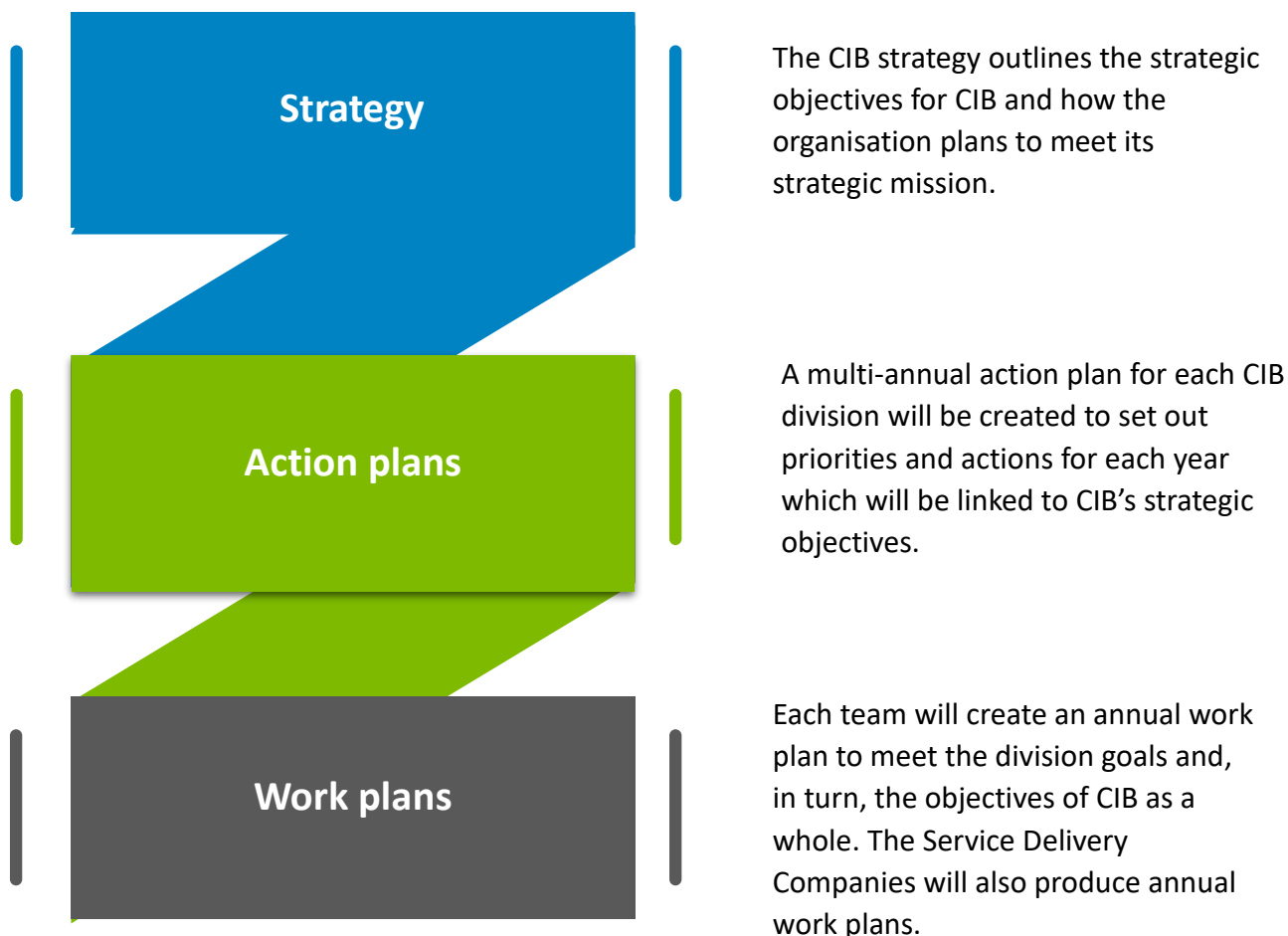
Demonstrate Efficiency and Effectiveness

Demonstrate service value through governance and outcomes

Objective five involves continuing to develop CIB's systems of governance and internal control, as well as using outcome-based metrics to demonstrate the impact made by services.

Implementation

The implementation of CIB's strategy will involve the entire organisation and will be monitored by the Board of CIB. The CIB business planning structure is outlined below.



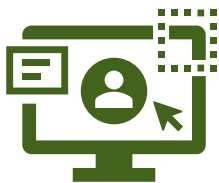
CIB intends to work closely with the Service Delivery Companies on a range of different areas named in the strategy, including communications, service channels, outcome metrics and quality frameworks. The support of the Service Delivery Companies will be crucial to the successful delivery of the strategic initiatives in this plan.

Governance and Monitoring

The Board of CIB is responsible for the development of CIB's strategic plans and monitors the implementation of those plans.

Each committee of the Board will monitor the implementation of strategic objectives, action plans and work plans assigned to their division. Relevant risks will also be monitored by the committees.

The implementation of the strategy will be monitored by the Board. A mid-point evaluation of the strategy will be carried out at end of 2024.



Assessment of Equality and Human Rights Issues

Section 42 of the Irish Human Rights and Equality Commission Act 2014 requires a public body, in the performance of its functions, to have regard to the need to:

1. eliminate discrimination;
2. promote equality of opportunity and treatment of its staff and the persons to whom it provides services; and
3. protect the human rights of its members, staff and the persons to whom it provides services.

Public bodies shall also set out in a manner that is accessible to the public in its strategic plan an assessment of the human rights and equality issues it believes to be relevant to its functions and purpose and the existing or proposed policies, plans and actions to address those issues.

Public Sector Duty Working Group

CIB established a Public Sector Duty Working Group in 2022 with representatives from across the organisation's grade and team structure. This group is conducting an initial assessment of human rights and equality issues that are relevant to CIB's functions and is developing an action plan in a number of different areas, to include specific Public Sector Duty training for staff members, the review of HR forms and materials, the promotion of awareness of human rights issues for staff members, the raising of awareness and understanding of forms of disabilities among staff members, as well as the promotion of awareness of human rights issues to staff members, Service Delivery Companies and the public. The working group has organised a number of informative seminars for staff members with external speakers. The group is currently surveying the wider organisation to gather their views on human rights and equality issues in CIB and how these relates to the work of individuals. Results from the survey will be factored into the initial assessment being carried out. It is planned that the Public Sector Duty Working Group will have an active role in proofing new developments in CIB in relation to human rights and equality issues and that it will examine our commitments on an ongoing basis and in the context of the external policy and legislative environment.

Access to Services for the Public

Equality of access to information, advice and advocacy is a core principle of CIB and the services it provides and funds. CIB is committed to diversity and will ensure that the right to equal treatment as established by equality legislation is upheld. We aim to ensure equality of access by funding or providing services in person, by phone and online, and through the Live Advisor (webchat) service and the Irish Remote Interpreting Service (IRIS). We publish major documents, such as our annual report, in Irish and English. CIB's Access Officer arranges support for people with disabilities who access our information and services. Our websites citizensinformation.ie and citizensinformationboard.ie are designed to provide a high level of accessibility. In December

2021, the National Disability Authority published their monitoring report for the EU Web Accessibility Directive in which citizensinformation.ie received the third highest score of the websites monitored. Further improvements in relation to website accessibility are one of the initiatives named under the first objective in this strategy, as well as supporting and promoting face-to-face services.

Policies and procedures

CIB has robust policies and procedures to promote equality and human rights and support our staff. If requested, accommodations are provided at recruitment stage and continue through the induction process and continually through the employee's working cycle. CIB's Staff Resource Pack contains detailed policies and procedures on employee relations including policies relating to dignity and respect in the workplace, learning and development, bullying and harassment, employee performance and safety, and health and welfare. All staff are required to undertake the Dignity at Work training course. CIB offers flexibility with its family-friendly leave policies, assisting working parents in work-life balance. In line with guidance from the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform, CIB is implementing a blended working policy to promote staff wellbeing. CIB's health and safety committee meet regularly and communicate important updates to all staff. Through CIB's Employee Assistance Service, staff are encouraged to maintain good physical and mental health. CIB invests in training and upskilling to support staff in their current roles and careers. It is planned to build on this foundation in the progression of training and development plans under objective two of this strategy.

Diversity and Inclusion

CIB recognises and respects the value of diversity and inclusion among our staff, stakeholders and the public we serve. We work to promote diversity and inclusion by:

- Respecting and recognising people as individuals (for example, seeking the views of staff members in relation to human rights and equality issues is one element of our commitment to gather the views, recommendations and opinions of our staff members)
- Treating all individuals, inside and outside of CIB, fairly (for example, by having in place a Dignity at Work Policy and a Code of Business Conduct, as well as applying public sector pay scales for all staff members)
- Ensuring equal access to employment and promotional opportunities for all employees and candidates, regardless of gender, age, sexual orientation, civil status, family status, religion, disability, race or membership of the Traveller community (for example, by highlighting the expanded wording on equal opportunities within our recruitment and advertising materials)
- Recognising the individual needs of those we employ and support (for example, by seeking to ensure that no staff member experiences a disadvantage in accessing or fully participating in working life with CIB)