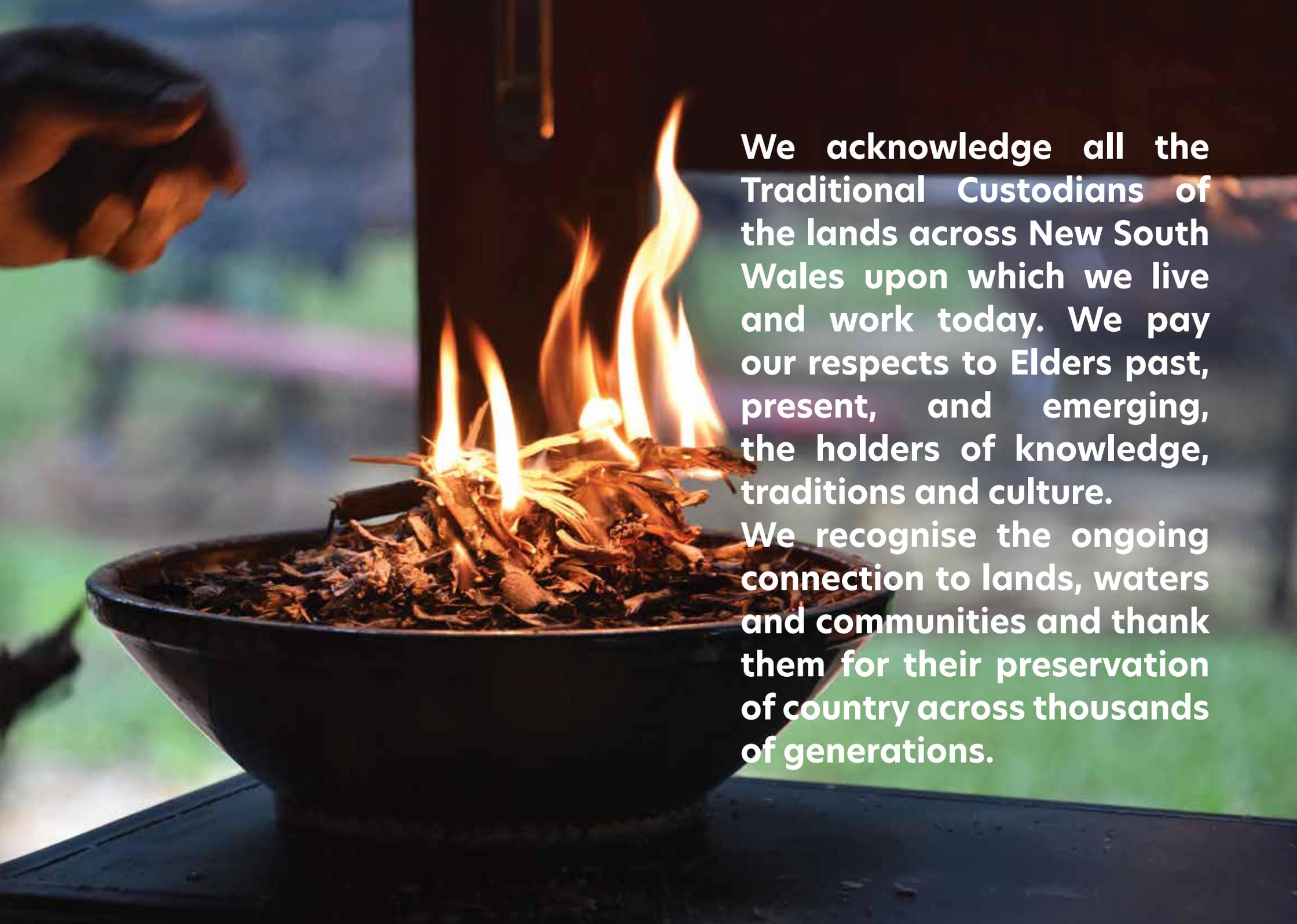




Future Strategy for Community Transport in Regional, Rural & Remote NSW

October 2022



We acknowledge all the Traditional Custodians of the lands across New South Wales upon which we live and work today. We pay our respects to Elders past, present, and emerging, the holders of knowledge, traditions and culture.

We recognise the ongoing connection to lands, waters and communities and thank them for their preservation of country across thousands of generations.

Contents

Foreward	3
Executive Summary	5
Strategy Process	9
Strategic Context	12
2022-2025 Strategy for Regional, Rural & Remote NSW	18
Implementation Plan	27



Forward

From the CTO

Access to transport remains a significant challenge across Regional, Rural and Remote (RRR) NSW with a range of complex contributing factors. Transport disadvantage is ultimately a form of social exclusion, as a lack of access to transport means people cannot participate fully within their community.

There is an over-representation of people experiencing transport disadvantage in RRR NSW with the presence of additional and unique barriers, impacting wellbeing and functioning of communities. There is also a growing unmet transport need among vulnerable cohorts in these communities, including elderly Australians, people with a disability, and First Nation's peoples.

The community transport sector seeks to address this transport disadvantage through provision of services that are accessible, affordable and responsive to the specific needs of people in the community.

Community transport is therefore much more than just a transport service. It is also a significant enabler of equitable inclusion and access to health, social and community care and a critical determinant of health outcomes in regional, rural and remote NSW.

Community transport provides a range of benefits both to individual customers and local communities, as well across social, health, aged care, disability, Indigenous and transport policy outcomes.

In order to help deliver on this, the Community Transport Organisation (CTO), in partnership with New England Sector Support Team (NESST) and supported by Transport for New South Wales (TfNSW) and the Department of Health and Aged Care, worked hand in hand with the sector to develop a future strategy for community transport in regional, rural and remote NSW.

The process for developing the strategy incorporated the recognition that this is not a homogenous region, rather a grouping of diverse communities each with distinct characteristics.

Extensive consultation took place through surveys, stakeholder interviews, regional workshops, and feedback sessions to ensure the strategy reflected the unique needs of each region, and was stakeholder owned and led.

The strategic planning process developed a shared vision for the sector and identified the most pressing challenges and opportunities to work collaboratively to address them. Underpinned by three priority areas of: enabling our communities, improving sector coordination and integration, and supporting sustainability,

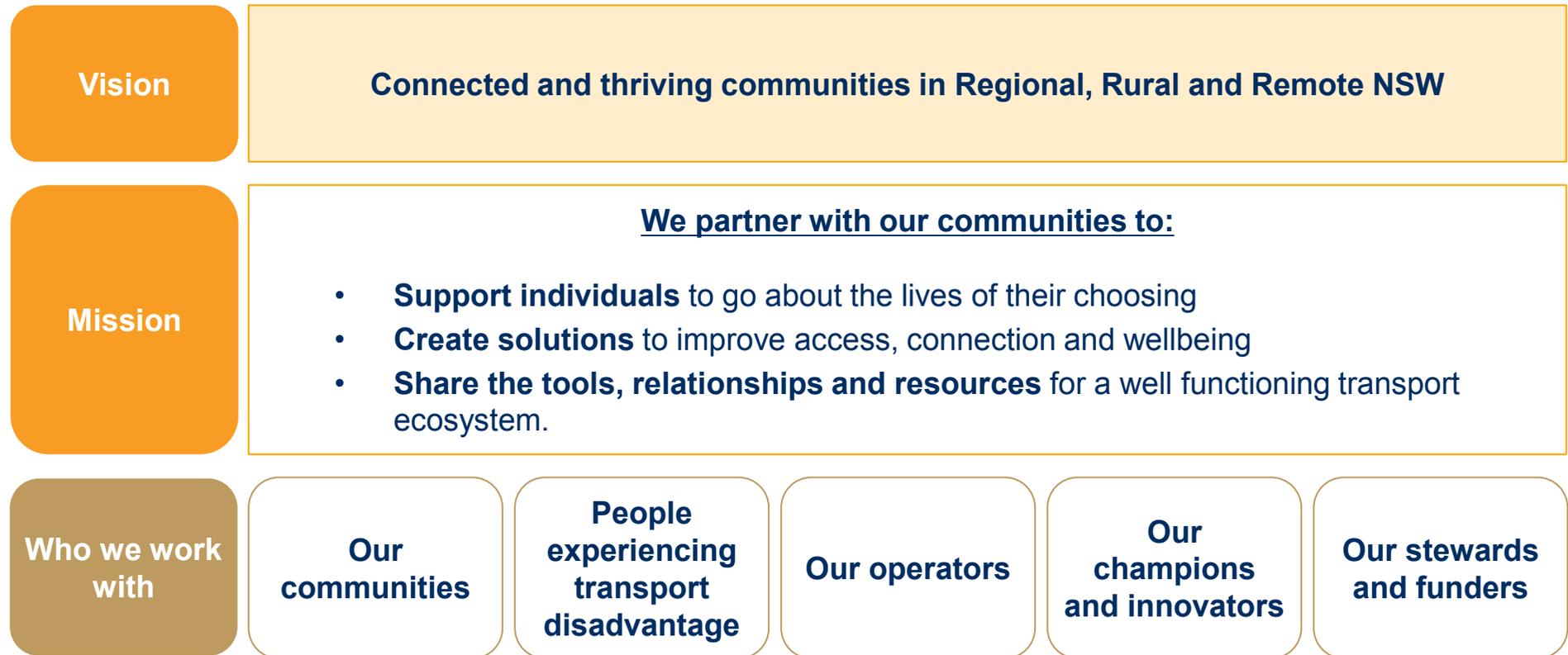
Ten strategic initiatives were developed which work toward achievement of a shared vision. With a 3 year strategic plan in hand, the CTO will work collaboratively with the sector to achieve this ambitious, and inclusive vision of connected and thriving communities within regional rural and remote New South Wales.

The CTO team



Executive Summary

Executive Summary: Our vision for the community transport sector is to create connected and thriving communities in RRR NSW



The vision and mission was developed together with the community transport sector, and reflects aspirational impact we seek to achieve for our communities. It recognises that community transport is more than just a transport service – but a key enabler of access, connection and wellbeing.

Executive Summary: Our aim for the next three years is to become a vibrant sector that is sustainable, integrated, and supporting our communities in place

Strategic direction 2022-25

Over the next three years we will become a **vibrant sector** that is: **“sustainable, integrated, and supporting our communities in place”**

Strategic priorities



Enabling our communities

Our communities are accessing, and having better experiences with essential services and in their day to day lives



Improving sector coordination and integration

Our providers and other service systems are working together in communities to coordinate, innovate, and create solutions



Supporting sector sustainability

Our sector is collaborating with, listening to and learning from each other under a shared desire for a sustainable transport system

Strategic initiatives

1. Share best practices on how to **support specific cohorts of need** within and across regions (e.g. First Nations Peoples), including exploring pilot initiatives that respond to cohorts of need

2. Explore the feasibility of developing a **coverage map of services** across RRR NSW

3. Support **sector wide marketing initiatives** to build community awareness

4. Explore opportunities to **coordinate long trips between regions** (e.g. technology pilots, a central coordination function, sharing assets / passengers)

5. Coordinate an **education campaign to other service systems** on the role and linkages with community transport

6. Create more **structured opportunities to share learnings and resources** within and across regions

7. Build the foundations of a **sector wide impact measurement approach**

8. Provide timely **sector support and resources to help providers** respond to impending funding & regulatory changes and emerging issues

9. Explore the feasibility of developing a **shared onboarding and training program** for staff and volunteers and establishing a **centralised volunteer onboarding function**

Enabling initiative



Advocating to Government

10. Develop a **joint approach for advocating to Government**

Executive Summary: Six guiding principles will steer implementation of the strategy



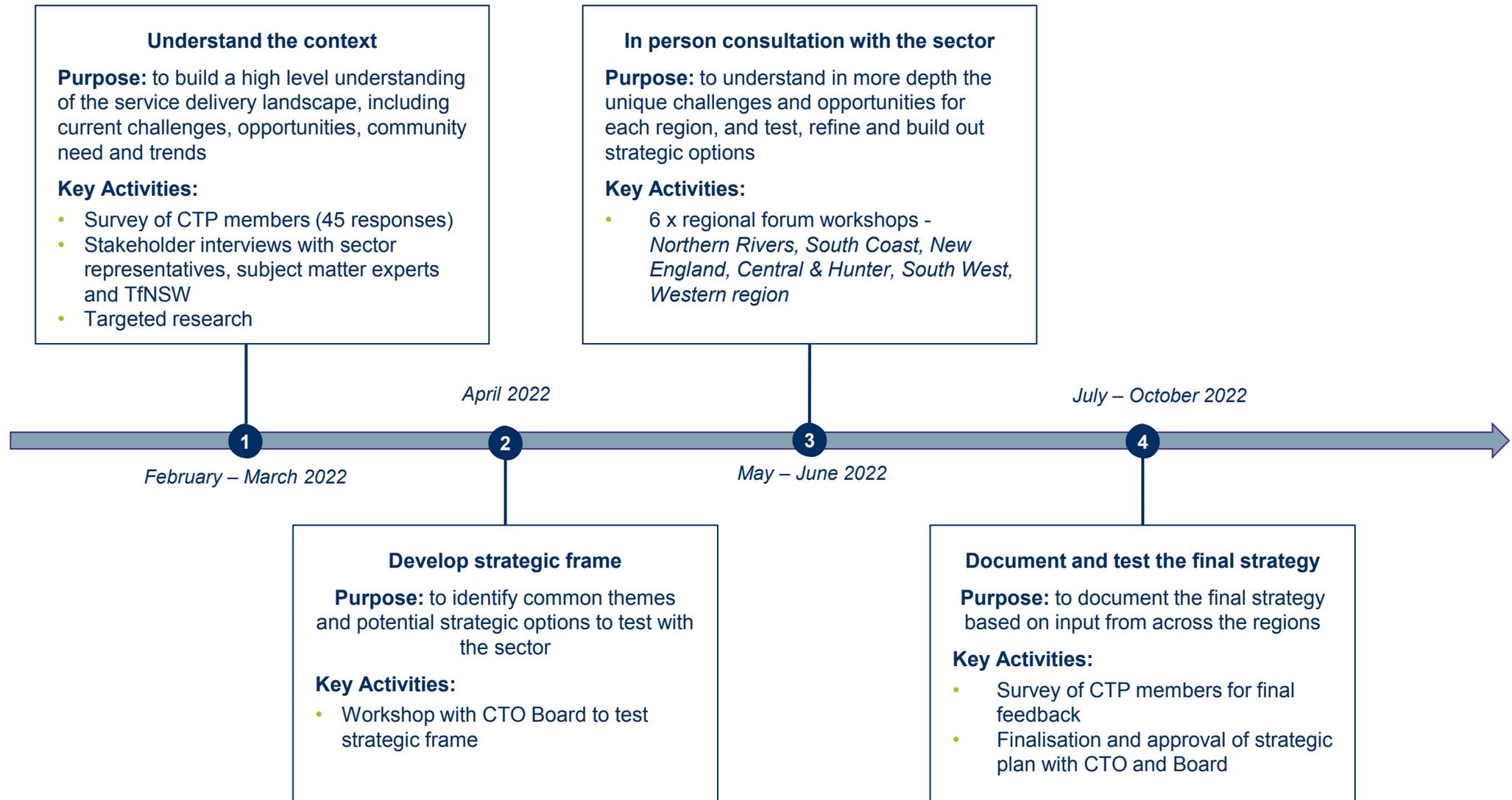


Strategy Process

CTO has worked with the sector to develop a shared strategy that underpins future collaboration

- Recognising the common challenges facing the sector in RRR NSW, the Community Transport Organisation (CTO), as the state-wide peak body for community transport providers in NSW, facilitated a strategic planning process.
- The strategic planning process developed a shared vision for the sector, and identified the most pressing challenges and opportunities to work collaboratively to address them.
- Several key principles guided the development of the Strategy, including that it should:
 - Reflect the **unique needs of each region**
 - Be **stakeholder led and owned**, with genuine opportunities for input and consultation
 - **Prioritise** the most pressing gaps, challenges and opportunities
 - Be **practical and actionable**, recognising we can't do everything and need to balance the varied demands on the sector's time and resources
- To ensure the principles above were met, the strategy process involved extensive stakeholder consultation (see next page for further detail).

The strategy was developed through extensive consultation to ensure it reflects the unique needs of each region and is owned by the sector





Strategy Context

We heard that every region in RRR NSW is unique, although there are some common needs and challenges

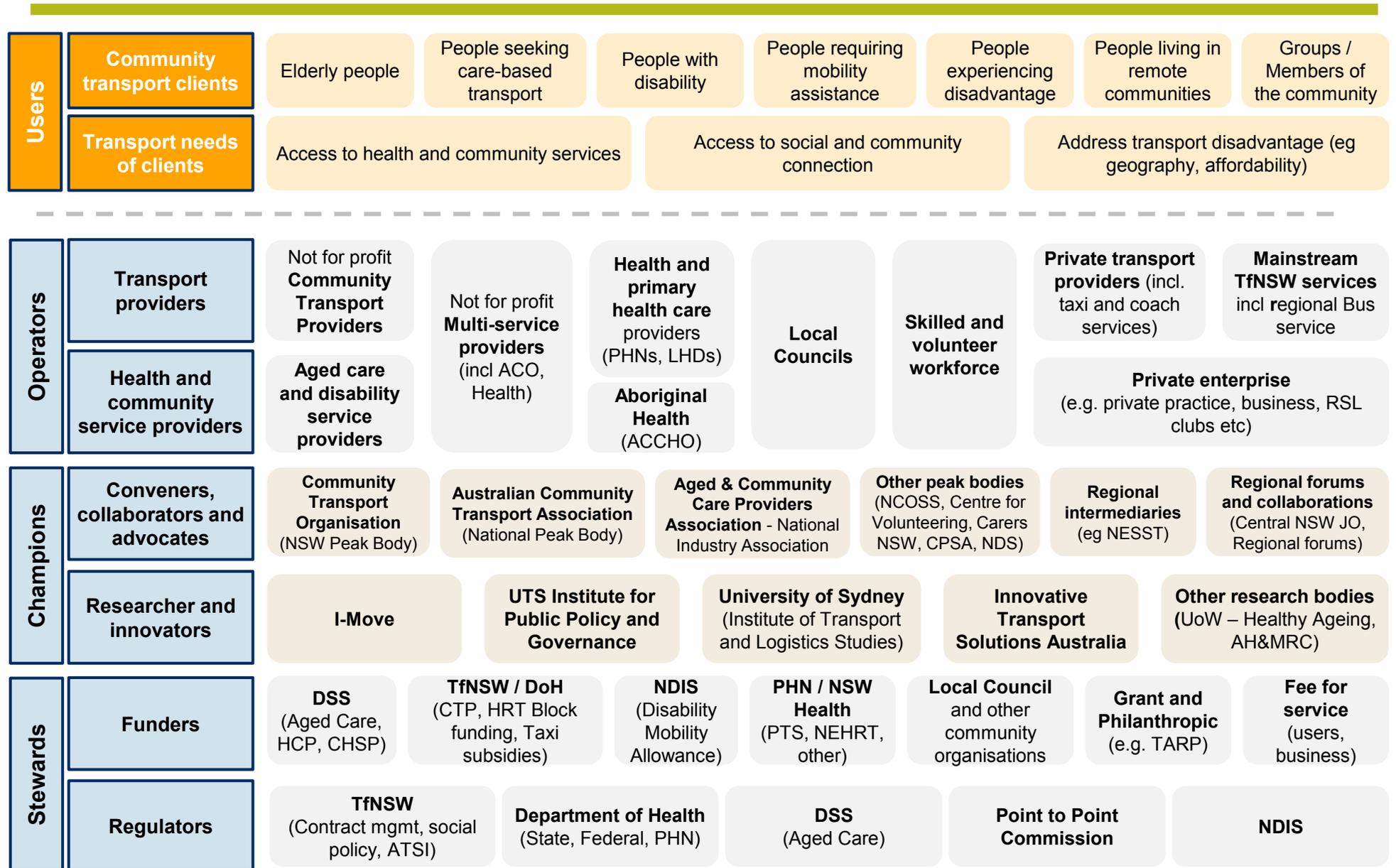
Every region in RRR NSW is unique..

- **RRR NSW is not a single, homogenous region** – but rather made up of diverse communities
- **Each of these communities has a unique fabric**, with differences in history, culture, demographics, and a range of socio-economic factors
- Areas of **unmet need can in part be influenced by the way community transport is structured** to respond to specific government funding streams and eligibility for services in a region.
- **It will be important for the Future Strategy for RRR NSW to take into account these differences** – noting that the diversity of RRR communities is not always recognised by funders or policymakers – leading to policies that are not fit-for-purpose and contributing to inequities in access to transport and support services in the community.

..although there are some common needs and challenges

- **A population ageing at a greater rate than metropolitan regions** – increasing the number of people needing support with transport, whilst simultaneously reducing the volunteer workforce
- **Limited public transport and point to point services** – resulting in a higher reliance on private vehicles and geographic exclusion
- Delivering transport and community services across **geographies characterised by large distances**
- **Reduced access to services, in particular medical and health services and educational institutions**, which can often only be accessed 100s of kilometres away
- **More limited employment opportunities and greater prevalence of financial disadvantage**, with people therefore more likely to face economic exclusion
- **A higher representation of First Nations communities living in remote and very remote areas** – facing higher rates of chronic and preventable illnesses, lower life expectancies and poorer self-reported health

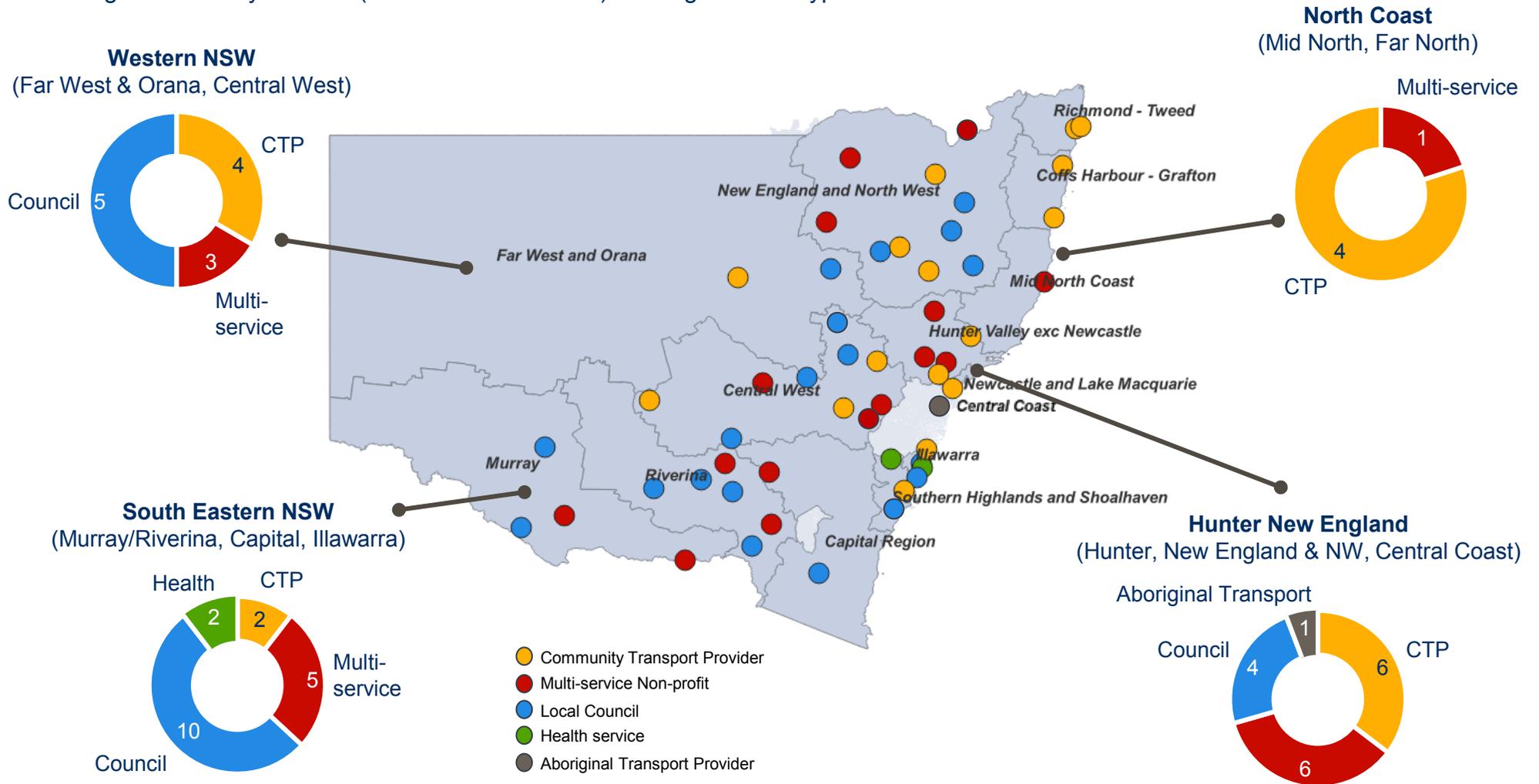
Research identifies the community transport ecosystem is complex – there are many different actors involved in connecting our communities



Community transport providers across NSW deliver services through different business operating models

Community Transport Organisation members in Regional, Rural & Remote NSW

53 organisations by location (ABS statistical area 4) and organisation type



1 | Source: CTO Member list. ABS statistical area 4 post codes and regions

We heard the biggest challenges facing the sector were funding and maintaining a workforce that can meet the growing needs of the community

Seven key challenges were identified in the sector survey and through research and consultations:

Funding is insufficient to cover the unit cost of providing services

Increasing competition for funding from new entrants to the market

It's difficult to attract skilled staff to deliver services, especially volunteers

Community need for transport exceeds available services and is growing

Community users face a range of individual barriers to access community transport

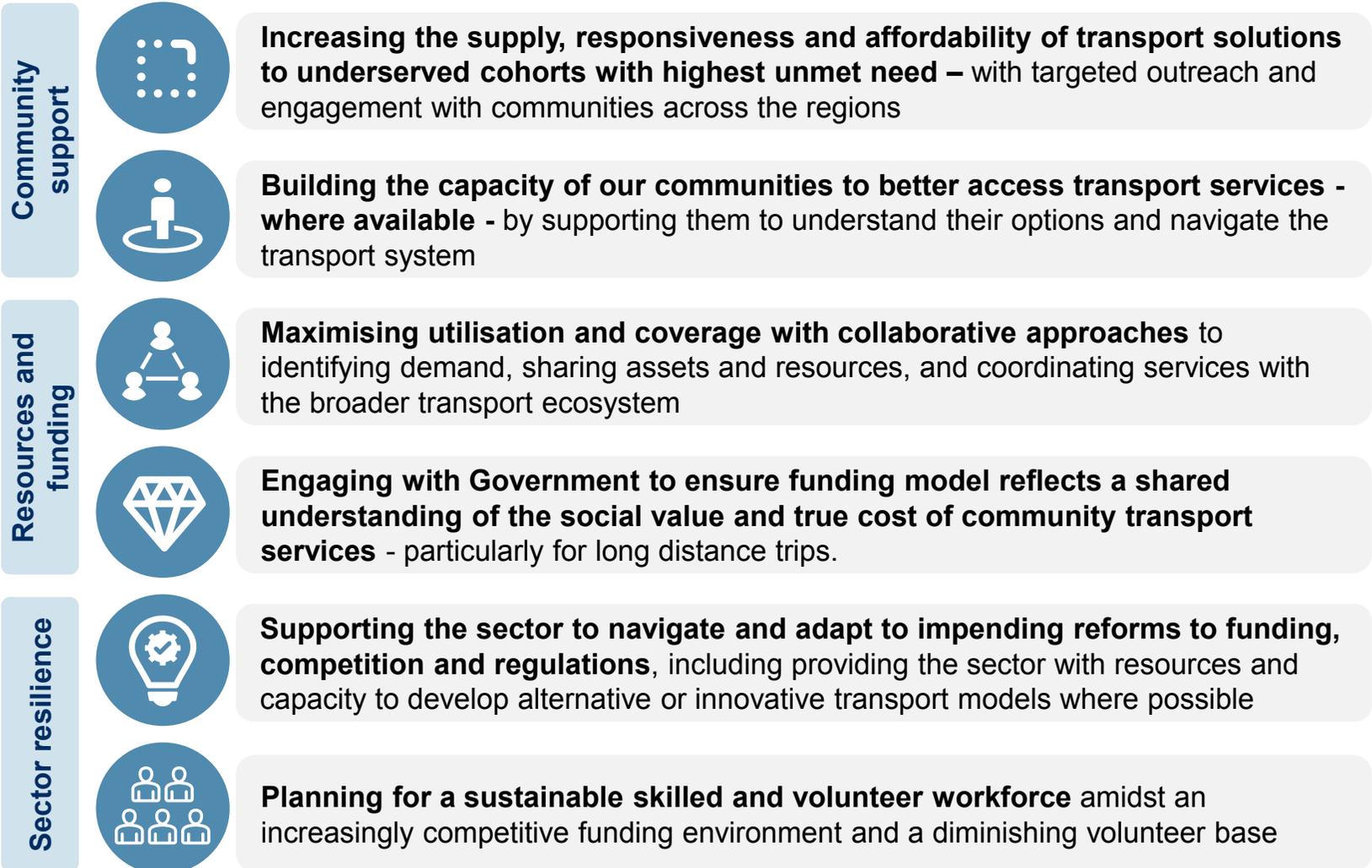
Providing users with choice and control requires coordination with different complex service systems

Transport services are less viable due to the long distances of the regional, rural and remote environment

The regulatory environment is onerous, complex and uncertain

Six key areas of opportunity in our operating context were also identified

Six key areas of opportunity





**2022-2025 Strategy
for Community Transport in
Regional, Rural & Remote NSW**

As a starting point to develop the Strategic Vision, we asked what a thriving community transport sector would look like for providers in RRR NSW

The impact we want...

Transport for **community wellbeing** - connecting people with essential health and community services

Transport for **social and community connection** – allowing all people to participate in their community

Transport **enabling independence and agency** – through choice and control and providing access to daily needs

Access and equity in transport for all – regardless of geography, need or circumstances

...and how we see ourselves achieving it

Well funded and resourced transport services
e.g. flexible funding, electric / appropriate fleet, greater capacity, volunteers

“Every trip, any time” – Innovative, flexible, on demand transport options for clients

Reliable services responsive to community need - filling gaps and supporting our most vulnerable communities

Fit for purpose and affordable options for all NSW communities

All embracing and **connected network of providers, championed by community and government**

Source: 41 responses from CTO RRR Strategy Survey, March 2022

Through consultations we developed our vision for the community transport sector is to create connected and thriving communities in RRR NSW



The vision and mission was developed together with the community transport sector, and reflects aspirational impact we seek to achieve for our communities. It recognises that community transport is more than just a transport service – but a key enabler of access, connection and wellbeing.

The sector also identified three priority areas of focus to underpin the strategic plan; addressing common challenges and building on our opportunities

<p>Our strategic priorities</p>	 <p>Enabling our communities</p> <p>Our communities are accessing, and having better experiences with essential services and in their day to day lives</p>	 <p>Improving sector coordination and integration</p> <p>Our providers and other service systems are working together in communities to coordinate, innovate, and create solutions</p>	 <p>Supporting sector sustainability</p> <p>Our sector is collaborating with, listening to and learning from each other under a shared desire for a sustainable transport system</p>
<p>Rationale</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The transport system can be complex and at times hard to navigate. • Informed and confident users lead to better, more accessible and responsive services, and lead to better outcomes for local communities. • Importantly, no two regions in NSW are the same. Solutions need to respond to local environment, service systems and target the areas of highest unmet need. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Our funding and regulatory environment is changing. We will need to adapt as well as work with funders to develop a more sustainable model. • Capacity to innovate and integrate will be key to maximising flexibility and coverage, stretching our assets and continuing to deliver services that meet community need. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Transport service provision is going through significant change – access to volunteers is diminishing, funding is changing and operating conditions are tightening. • Funders, operators and champions need to work together to ensure the sector is resilient and well funded through a myriad of change.

Ten initiatives were also developed for the sector to work on together to make progress towards our vision



Our first priority under the Strategy is “enabling our communities” – sector collaboration to better support the communities we operate within



Enabling our communities

Why are we focusing on this priority?

Supporting communities is at the heart of why the community transport sector exists. There are opportunities to work collaboratively to improve this support by (1) increasing community awareness of transport options and how to navigate the system, (2) ensuring the supply of services are targeted at areas of highest unmet need, and (3) that how services are delivered is appropriate to the unique needs of communities

What initiatives are we pursuing under this priority?

Initiative	Description	Intended Outcome
1. Share best practices on how to support specific cohorts of people within and across regions	This might include dedicating time at regional forums to focus on specific cohorts (e.g. First Nations Australians, patients with dialysis), or to develop pilot initiatives between providers testing adjustments to service delivery methods	Community transport services are better aligned and appropriate for the unique needs of communities, as through sharing knowledge providers can identify opportunities to improve service delivery approaches
2. Explore the feasibility of developing a coverage map of services across RRR NSW	Exploring the possibility of developing a coverage map that identifies the services across RRR NSW that are being provided by different community transport providers in different regions	The sector has a better understanding of areas within RRR NSW that are underserved for community transport. Providers are also in a better position to coordinate services between themselves, by building awareness of the different service routes providers offer - helping providers identify opportunities to share assets or routes
3. Support sector wide marketing initiatives to build community awareness	Supporting sector wide initiatives to develop common marketing approaches and materials that can be used by providers in RRR NSW – either by leveraging existing work by providers, or developing new materials on specific focus areas	Raising the profile and knowledge of community transport in the community. This will support providers to reach more people in the community in need of community transport support, and help build community awareness of transport options and how to access them.

Our second priority is “improving sector coordination and integration” – this will help providers operate more efficiently and better support end users



Improving sector coordination and integration

Why are we focusing on this priority?

Improved sector coordination and integration will support providers to deliver services more efficiently and sustainably – increasing the viability, flexibility, utilisation and coverage of services by exploring opportunities to share assets, resources and knowledge. In turn, this will improve the responsiveness of services to community needs

What initiatives are we pursuing under this priority?

Initiative	Description	Intended Outcome
4. Explore opportunities to coordinate long trips between regions	This might include considering ways to share assets and passengers between providers, improve coordination through technology, or establishing a central coordination function in select region(s) with dedicated resourcing to manage coordination between providers	Trips between regions are more financially viable for providers to run, with costs reduced by sharing assets and passengers. Services are also more responsive and flexible to community needs, as sharing trips will support increased service schedules.
5. Coordinate an education campaign to other service systems on the role and linkages with community transport	Developing an education campaign to other service systems on the role of community transport. This might include communications materials or delivering roadshow events (e.g. to hospitals) that identify the types of services community transport are funded for, best practices for coordinating with transport providers, and how to support community users (e.g. timing of medical appointments)	Reduce the friction points and costs providers face scheduling trips involving other service systems (e.g. hospitals), and improve community users choice, control, and personal experience (e.g. by avoiding the cost of having to stay overnight to access medical appointments)
6. Create more structured opportunities to share resources & learnings within and across regions	Exploring opportunities to increase the sharing of learnings and best practices across the community transport sector. This might include dedicating time at regional or state-wide forums to focus on sharing learnings on specific topics, or setting up a shared online portal or forum for the sharing of resources	Support providers to identify opportunities to improve how they deliver their services and save time and resources “reinventing the wheel”

Our third priority is “supporting sector sustainability” – exploring opportunities to work collaboratively to address challenges with funding and workforce



Supporting sector sustainability

Why are we focusing on this priority?

Sector collaboration on this priority will support providers to better respond to key challenges that threaten providers’ viability and are difficult for providers to address on their own. These challenges primarily include the unsustainable funding and regulatory model, and attracting a sufficient workforce (both paid and volunteer) to deliver services at a frequency that meets community needs

What initiatives are we pursuing under this priority?

Initiative	Description	Intended Outcome
7. Build the foundations of a sector wide impact measurement approach	Explore options for developing a sector wide impact measurement approach. This might include funding a sector wide study on the social impact or social return on investment of community transport, or developing a sector wide outcomes measurement framework providers can use to identify their own impact	The sector is in a stronger position to advocate for an improved funding model, by identifying (1) the full range of benefits the sector provides beyond transport, and 2) the true costs of providing community transport services
8. Provide timely sector support and resources to help providers respond to impending funding & regulatory changes and emerging issues	This initiative will involve CTO coordinating the development of guidance materials or forums providing advice on expected changes to the community transport funding and regulatory models, or other significant issues, opportunities or innovations, that may emerge over the next few years	Providers are better placed to respond to impending funding regulatory changes, including by minimising the costs on individual providers of considering how to respond on their own
9. Explore the feasibility of developing a shared onboarding and training program for staff and volunteers and establishing a centralised volunteer onboarding function	Exploring the development of centralised online training modules, as well as the potential for training to be certified to make employment more attractive. It could also explore establishing a centralised volunteer onboarding function that could onboard volunteers centrally and then direct them to providers	More workers and volunteers attracted and retained in sector workforce. Providers reduce the time and resources required for onboarding and training staff and volunteers. A centralised onboarding function can help placement of volunteers between providers.

Our enabling initiative “advocating to government” will support all three priorities due to the importance of the funding and regulatory environment



Advocating to Government

Why are we focusing on advocacy?

Many of the challenges facing the sector – such as the financial viability of services and attracting a sufficient workforce – have at their core challenges with the funding and regulatory environment established and overseen by Government (both Commonwealth and State). The extent of progress under each of the three priorities in the strategy is therefore dependant on working with Government to improve funding and the regulatory environment. Developing a shared approach to advocacy will amplify the voice of providers and the sector as a whole.

What initiatives are we pursuing under this priority?

Initiative	Description	Intended Outcome
10. Develop a joint approach to advocating to Government	This initiative involves developing a joint approach across the sector for advocating to government for 1) a more flexible funding and regulatory model, 2) a more sustainable workforce/ volunteer model, and (3) ensuring that the voices and unique circumstances of regional, rural and remote NSW are taken into account in policy development. This strategy forms the starting point of the shared approach – articulating the shared vision for the sector and the key challenges and opportunities the sector would like to address.	Stronger relationships with Government. Government has a better understanding of the challenges faced by the sector and the benefits the sector provides. Progress made toward a more sustainable service delivery, funding and regulatory model



Implementation Plan

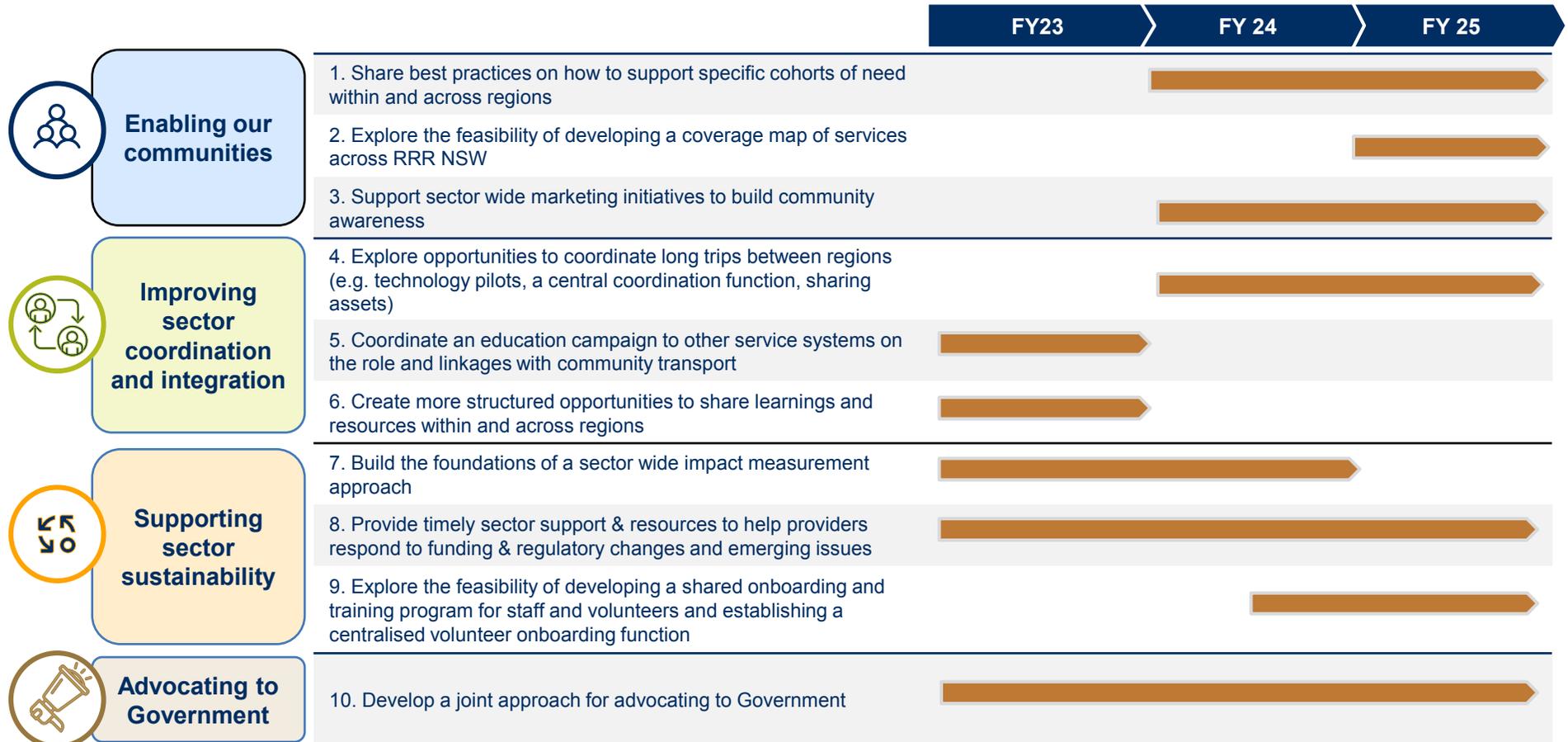
Six guiding principles will steer implementation of the strategy

Principle	Implications for how the strategy is implemented
<p>The Strategy articulates the shared vision for the community transport sector in regional, rural and remote NSW</p>	<p>We will seek to present a united sector voice to advocate for and support the strategy, in particular when advocating to Government</p>
<p>Everyone has a role to play to successfully deliver the strategy</p>	<p>We will establish a governance framework to hold ourselves accountable with clear roles. Generally:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - CTO will be responsible for overarching coordination, leading sector-wide initiatives, convening collaboration across regions and seeking funding for initiatives as appropriate - Regional forums will be responsible for regional leadership and delivery of initiatives; individual regions or providers may also lead select initiatives with funding support via CTO
<p>We value the voices and perspectives of all community transport providers and end users</p>	<p>Interested and affected members will be consulted on the key steps for developing and progressing each initiative. We will also consider opportunities to bring in the voices of our end users</p>
<p>Delivery of the strategy has to take into account the unique local contexts of each region</p>	<p>Regional forums will need to play a role in the delivery of each initiative. This may involve leading initiatives specific to their region, or nominating a lead to input into initiatives that cross multiple regions</p>
<p>We will be realistic about resourcing required to implement the strategy</p>	<p>CTO will explore opportunities to seek funding to implement specific initiatives We will look to leverage shared resources and knowledge across regions where possible; this may include dedicating staff time to work on specific initiatives</p>
<p>We will need to be flexible, as we are operating in an uncertain environment</p>	<p>Implementation and prioritisation of initiatives may need to be adapted if circumstances change, in particular depending on impending changes to the funding and regulatory model</p>

The strategic plan will be delivered over three years, with initiatives sequenced across the period

High level implementation timeline

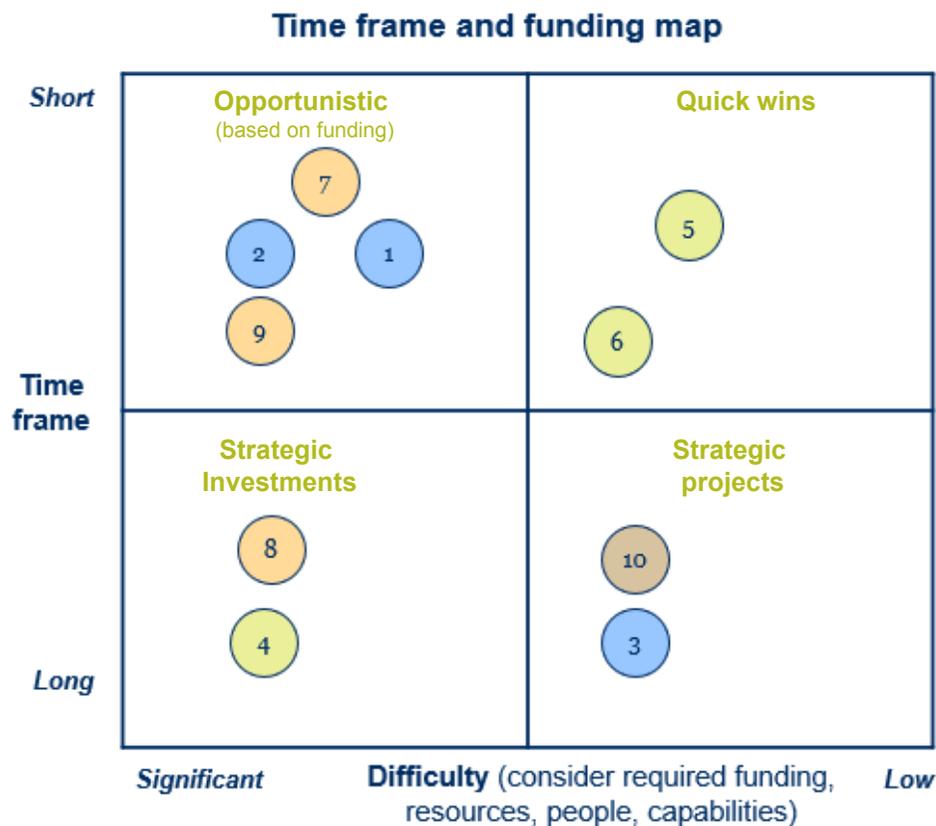
*Timelines may change in response to emerging priorities



*Initiative 10 spans across all strategic priorities

Sequencing was informed by prioritising the delivery of our strategic initiatives – recognising we can't do everything at once

Initiatives were prioritised based on implementation time frame and difficulty



Initiatives will be delivered in 'horizons', and allocated based on their relative effort to deliver

Horizon 1: Build foundations and secure funding/resourcing

- Start / deliver initiatives with low funding requirements
- Secure funding for initiatives requiring investment
- Build foundations for sector advocacy

Horizon 2: Working together, build momentum

- Stand up pilots, roll out sector-wide initiatives
- Finalise and monitor low effort H1 initiatives

Horizon 3: Position for the future

- Finalise delivery of pilots and initiatives, consider expanding across regions/sector
- Position sector for next round of strategic planning

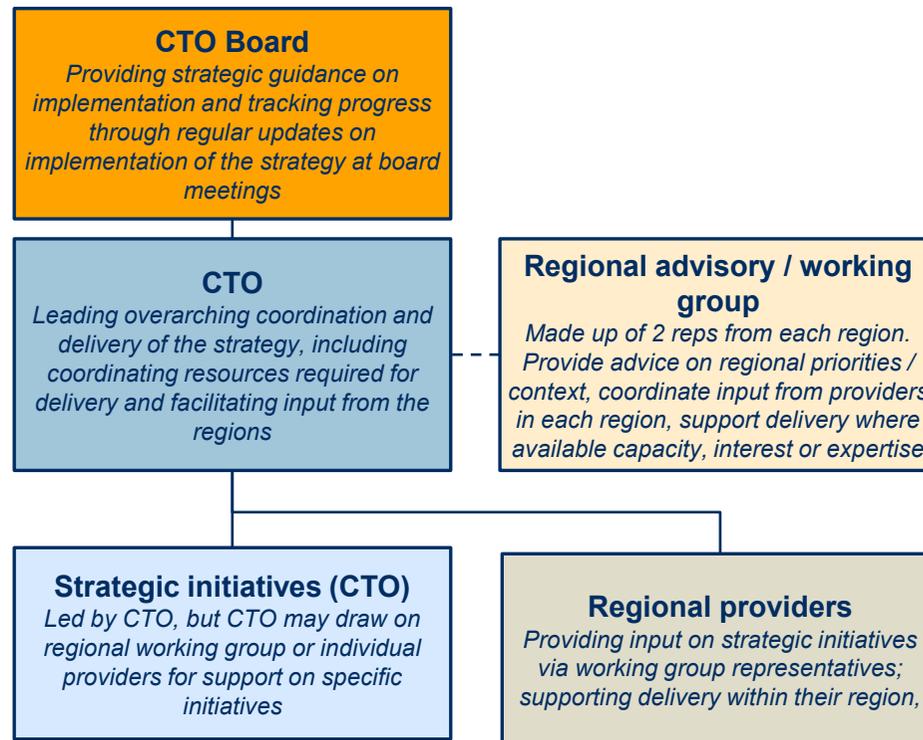
Quick wins: Shorter time-frame, lower funded initiatives

Strategic projects: Longer timeframe, lower funded initiatives

Strategic investments: Longer timeframe, higher funded initiatives

A governance framework will be established to ensure input from across the regions, keep stakeholders accountable and support progress

CTO will be accountable to CTO Board and guided by a regional advisory / working group with reps from each regional forum



Roles and responsibilities will vary for each initiative - this will be clarified with stakeholders as an early step of implementation

For further development with stakeholders

	Initiative	Key  CTO  Region	Who will lead delivery of the initiative?	Who will lead overarching coordination?	Who will fund (or lead pursuing funding) for the initiative?
Enabling our communities	1. Support sector wide marketing initiatives to build community awareness				 
	2. Explore the feasibility of developing a coverage map of services across RRR NSW		 		
	3. Share best practices on how to support specific cohorts of need within and across regions, including exploring pilot initiatives responding to cohorts of need		 		 
Sector coordination and integration	4. Explore ways to coordinate long trips between regions (e.g. technology pilots, a central coordination function, sharing assets / passengers)		 		 
	5. Coordinate an education campaign to other service systems on the role and linkages with community transport		 		
	6. Create more structured opportunities to share learnings and resources within and across regions		 		 
Supporting sector sustainability	7. Build the foundations of a sector wide impact measurement approach				
	8. Provide timely sector support and resources to help providers respond to impending funding & regulatory changes and emerging issues				
	9. Explore the feasibility of developing a shared onboarding and training program and establishing a centralised volunteer onboarding function				
	10. Develop a joint approach for advocating to Government				

All regions will be consulted on the implementation of each initiative – in particular those regions who identified initiatives as a top priority

The table below identifies the initiatives that came up most often in regional forums and maps the forums they were raised in:

	New England	Northern Rivers	South West	Western	Central & Hunter	South Coast
1: Sector wide marketing & awareness approach	Green	Green	Green	Green	Grey	Green
2: Coverage map of services and funding across RRR NSW	Grey	Grey	Grey	Green	Grey	Orange
3: Share best practices on how to support specific cohorts of need	Grey	Green	Orange	Grey	Grey	Grey
4: Explore ways to coordinate long trips between regions	Green	Green	Orange	Orange	Green	Grey
5: Education campaign to other service systems	Green	Orange	Green	Grey	Grey	Green
6: More structured opportunities to share learnings and resources	Orange	Orange	Orange	Grey	Grey	Green
7: Sector wide impact measurement approach	Grey	Green	Green	Green	Orange	Green
8: Sector support and resources to help providers respond to funding & regulatory changes	Orange	Orange	Grey	Orange	Grey	Grey
9: Shared onboarding and training program or function	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Grey
10: Joint approach to advocating to Government	Green	Orange	Green	Orange	Green	Green

Key: ■ Initiative identified as a top priority for region ■ Initiative identified as a lower priority for region ■ Initiative not specifically identified by the region as a priority initiative

Note initiatives were identified at regional forums through an idea generation process and then prioritised based on which were considered most valuable for the region. Regions did not vote on initiatives that weren't identified through the idea generation process at their forum. Consequently, there may be some initiatives regions find valuable but weren't specifically identified as a priority



COMMUNITY TRANSPORT
ORGANISATION LTD

Level 11, 56 Berry St
North Sydney NSW 2060
e: reception@cto.org.au
p: 1300 679 286