

# Nesta's Strategy to 2030



Our purpose

**At Nesta, our purpose is to design, test and scale new solutions to society's biggest problems.**



Our vision

**Our vision is that, by 2030, Nesta will have significantly improved the lives of millions of people. Combining rigour and creativity, we will be a world leader in driving innovation for social good.**

Our missions



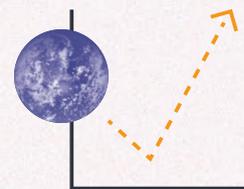
**A fairer start**

We want every child to have an equal start in life. Our mission is to narrow the outcome gap between children growing up in disadvantage and the national average.



**A healthy life**

We want good health for all, particularly those most affected by existing inequalities. Our mission is to increase the average number of healthy years lived in the UK, while narrowing health inequalities.



**A sustainable future**

We want an economy that works better for people and the planet. Our mission is to accelerate the decarbonisation of household activities in the UK and improve levels of productivity.

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# Foreword

Nesta's purpose has always been to support innovation for social good. In our new strategy, that purpose remains constant but the way we achieve it will change substantially.

Over the last decade, we have been focused on demonstrating and growing the potential of innovation methods, by funding and researching innovation, codifying work into tools and guides used widely by practitioners, and incubating new organisations that fill critical gaps in capability.

The next challenge is to show how these approaches and capabilities can translate into large-scale, life-changing impact.

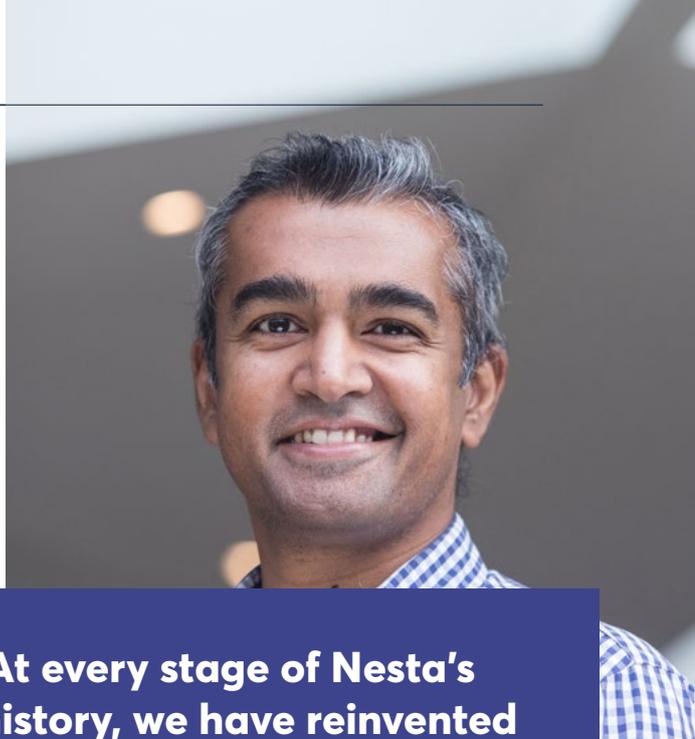
In this next chapter then, Nesta will be more focused and mission-driven. We will concentrate our resources on addressing three defining societal challenges: how we can **give every child a fairer start**, how we can **help people to live healthier lives**; and how we can **build a more sustainable economy**.

The test of our success as an organisation will be whether we make a difference to measurable outcomes across areas like educational attainment, obesity and carbon reduction. In each, we will set bold objectives that may seem unrealistically ambitious, but which we hope will act as a lodestar that lifts our sight.

We will also work in new ways, concentrating on playing three different roles.

Firstly, as an **innovation partner**, we will form long-term partnerships with anchor institutions to understand a problem and the opportunities it poses. We will deploy teams of designers, behavioural scientists and data scientists to design new solutions and business models and test them rigorously. We will work with private and voluntary organisations as well as public sector organisations to see things through to scale. This will involve building a network of early adopters, while also working with government and regulators to enable widespread adoption.

While it is essential to support existing institutions to grow and change, new entrants are a key contributor to innovation, particularly where



**'At every stage of Nesta's history, we have reinvented ourselves to address the challenges and opportunities of the time.'**

solutions require new business models, or can be delivered by technology-enabled products rather than services. So in our second role, as a **venture builder**, we will support the creation of new businesses and the growth of existing early stage ventures. By providing investment, skills and expertise, and a path to market, we will develop new ideas, find the right teams to found and lead new ventures, and provide the scaffolding required to substantially increase the likelihood of success.

Finally, we will work as what might be called a **system shaper** - ensuring that the funding, policies and institutions, particularly within our mission areas, are conducive to learning and innovation. From capability gaps in the design and testing of new solutions to procurement rules that impede the emergence and spread of better solutions, we will, through our work in each mission, be able to identify these issues and help create environments that nurture innovation more successfully.

Delivering these roles will require us to use our existing expertise and networks, as well as grow new capabilities. We helped establish the [Behavioural Insights Team](#) as a leading social enterprise and model for behavioural science internationally, and plan to work closely with

them in delivering our missions. We will also harness the skills and networks of three enterprises that we have incubated over the last decade: [Nesta Challenges](#), the [Innovation Growth Lab](#), and [People Powered Results](#), which will continue to thrive, working on a fully-commercial basis in sectors and places that are broader than the focus of this strategy.

At every stage of Nesta's history, we have reinvented ourselves to address the challenges and opportunities of the time. Our new strategy will require new skills and partnerships and fresh

ways of working. It will require us to be diverse in the skills and perspectives we bring together, and cut across the usual boundaries of the public, private and voluntary sectors, and the divisions between academia, industry and government. We look forward to learning with you as we set out on our next journey.

Ravi Gurumurthy, CEO



## Our reasons for optimism

Today's society is rich in resources: immense human and cultural capital, a wealth of data and an increasing role for social returns in the allocation of finances. In the face of huge societal challenges, Nesta's optimism lies in the opportunity we see to harness these resources of *people, data, finances* and *culture*. By finding new ways of using and combining them, we can unlock their potential.

### People

The actions and behaviours of citizens and frontline practitioners are among the biggest determinants of health, learning and economic wellbeing. Over the past decade, our shared understanding of the drivers of human behaviour, including the effects of environment and context in shaping choice, has expanded tremendously (with further learning to come as the focus of the behavioural sciences expands from individuals to groups and communities). Nesta has helped use this knowledge to design engaging, effective services, for example by investing in

the Behavioural Insights Team and FutureGov, and by incubating the [People Powered Results](#) enterprise. Yet still public policy pays insufficient attention to the drivers of behaviour, leaving countless opportunities to harness and strengthen motivations and capabilities and create more supportive choice environments and more user-friendly services.

### Data

A data revolution is taking place in almost every part of our economy and society. There is immense potential to push the boundaries of how data is used in public services and social movements – such as identifying problems earlier using predictive analytics, matching resources with needs more accurately, tailoring services in highly personalised ways and [combining human and machine intelligence](#) at scale.

### Finances

Both private capital and public investment can be used more effectively to drive impact. Nesta has used alternative finance (impact

investing, repayable grants and challenge prizes) to increase our impact, and will continue to do so. However, significant unfulfilled potential remains. For example, procurement rules often strangle innovation, leaving an untapped opportunity for public and private procurement to support the initiation and scaling of good ideas. Meanwhile, shifting resources from treatment to prevention on issues such as obesity could result in a step change in health outcomes.

### Culture

We know that arts and culture can inspire, mobilise and reshape how people think about the world. Countless films, exhibits and concerts have stirred our collective consciousness, moving communities into action. But, too often, we overlook this power. Nesta has brought support and investment to the creative industries (including through the [Creative Industries Policy and Evidence Centre](#) and the [Arts and Culture Impact Fund](#)) but there remains untapped power to reframe our work, shape opinion and galvanise action.

# What we want to achieve

To meet our vision of significantly improving millions of lives, we will pursue three innovation missions. Each mission is a response to a generational societal challenge, one where we believe innovation has a big part to play in driving large-scale change.



**We will be mission-driven in our work – setting fixed goals and iterating on how best to achieve them.**

For each mission we will continuously assess what is and is not working, deciding what to continue with and what to stop on the basis of its potential for impact at scale.

To succeed we will need to build strong working relationships with families, frontline workers, service delivery organisations, policymakers and academics. Our solutions will need to work at different levels of the system, from small improvements to how a service is delivered to grander interventions that rewrite how policies or market forces work.

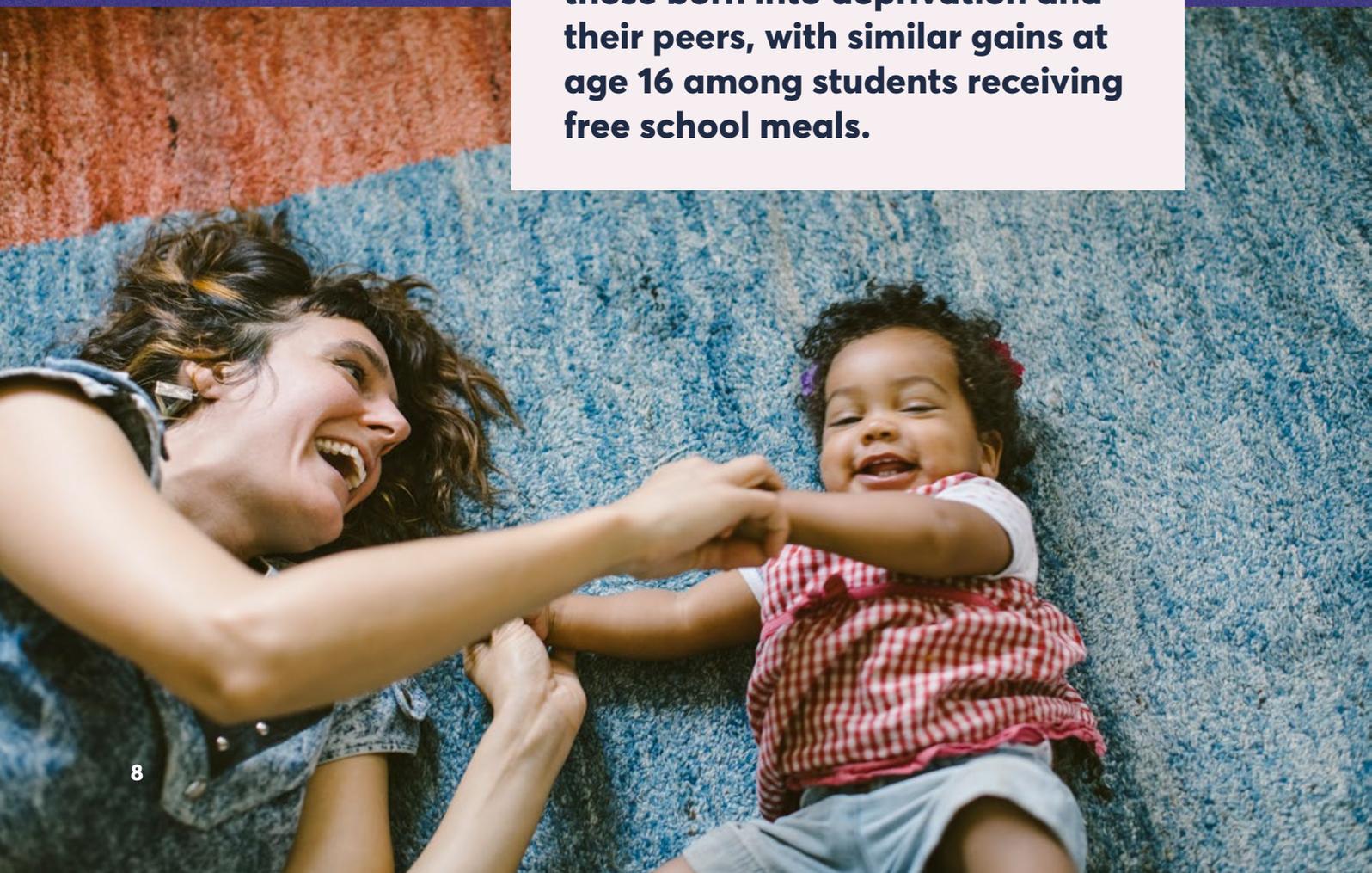
**Our missions are ambitious and we must be prepared to fail and learn rapidly along the way. Nonetheless, we believe that a fairer, healthier, more sustainable future is within reach, and that innovation can help us to achieve it.**

## A fairer start



**Our mission is to narrow the outcome gap between children growing up in disadvantage and the national average.**

**Our goal is that, by 2030, the UK will have eliminated the school readiness gap between those born into deprivation and their peers, with similar gains at age 16 among students receiving free school meals.**



**The circumstances of our childhood set us on a trajectory that affects the rest of our lives, with children born into disadvantage being far more likely to experience poorer health, lower earnings, a shorter life expectancy and lower levels of happiness than their peers. Taken together, the early years (ages 0–5) and secondary school period (ages 11–16) account for the development of 80 per cent of this divergence in life outcomes.**

**We know that investing in early childhood can vastly improve outcomes for our poorest children. Yet progress to narrow the gap in early years has stalled, with trends once again worsening, and made even more stark by COVID-19. Fragmented service delivery, the distributed nature of national early childhood policy, an overstretched early years workforce and lack of support for parents all combine to leave many children without the resources they need in their early years.**

#### **Our programmatic focus:**

##### **Early childhood**

From the moment of conception, the life trajectories of children in richer and poorer families begin to diverge. Some of this has its roots in physiological development. Our brains and bodies are built and refined in the womb and first years of life, meaning maternal health, diet and early nutrition play a considerable role in our development.

The context of the home environment also exerts a great deal of influence. Financial difficulties, strained relationships and poor or unstable housing can all prevent parents and carers from giving their child the best possible start, and forming the strong early attachments that are so critical in infant development. Indeed, socio-economic and environmental factors can explain much of [the gap between children from richer and poorer families](#) during the early years.

Children and families also need access to high-quality childcare to thrive. The UK has a chronic shortage of early years practitioners, access to high-quality childcare is often dictated by where someone lives, and even where supply is good, poorer families are much less likely to take up these options.

These problems are surmountable. While the evidence is not perfect, we broadly know what drives improved outcomes for lower-income families and why. Innovation can play a critical role in turning this knowledge into action. Data-driven labour market advice could help drive more applicants to early childhood training and jobs. More deliberate design of the services delivered in pregnancy and the first year of life could deliver enormous benefits by building up parenting skills and agency from the beginning. Experimenting with different models of data sharing, or different ways to support parents to navigate services, could help improve take-up of government support. Together with partners who are experts in policy design, service delivery and have deep expertise in early childhood development, Nesta can accelerate the pace of change by overcoming barriers to progress, and resolving empirically any uncertainties that might be causing delays.

#### **Additional focus: Secondary education**

In secondary schools, our challenge is to improve outcomes for disadvantaged children and those disproportionately affected by COVID-19 school closures. We will form partnerships with groups of schools – combining their expertise with our own in data science, behavioural science, technology design and evaluation – to identify and grow practice that supports those children who need it most. We will continue our work supporting the effective use of EdTech platforms, helping to ensure they meet the needs of children and teachers.

## A healthy life



**Our mission is to increase the average number of healthy years lived in the UK, while narrowing health inequalities.**

**Our goal is to halve the prevalence of obesity by 2030. This would increase healthy life expectancy by an average of nearly two years for around ten million people in the UK, while narrowing health inequalities between the richest and poorest in society.**



**Over the past decade, the increase in UK life expectancy has slowed dramatically and health inequalities have widened. One of the starkest truths we face is that the poorest in society die around nine years before their more affluent peers, and experience ill health almost two decades earlier. This gap is socially determined: the conditions in which people live and the opportunities available to them shape the extent to which they can be healthy. Related negative outcomes such as loneliness and high blood pressure contribute to the greatest loss of healthy life. Obesity, which affects 35 million adults in the UK, and loneliness, which affects 9 million people, account for a disproportionate risk to healthy life across the UK.**

**Our programmatic focus:  
Tackling food environments**

Relatively small changes to diets can make a big difference to health outcomes. On average, [adults eat 195 calories more than they need each day, the equivalent of a packet of crisps](#). For those who are overweight, this increases to 320 excess calories. By reducing daily calorie consumption by an average of 250 calories over a 5 year period, our projections indicate that 50 per cent of adults who are obese and 16 per cent of those who are overweight would move into a healthier weight class. This would mean around ten million people in the UK could expect to live nearly two more years in good health as a result of changes to their diets.

Many efforts to date have put too much onus on individuals without fully recognising the influence of supermarkets, restaurants and food producers on the choices we make. To effectively reduce obesity, we must make healthy eating easier, regardless of how little money or time people have, where they live or how health-conscious they are. Manufacturers must reformulate their products, retailers must actively promote healthier choices and government must ensure people have controlled portion sizes and access to healthier food. The public needs improved transparency about what they are eating and what alternatives are available.

It is possible to shift the market dynamics that mould people's food environments. While the Soft Drinks Industry Levy made certain drinks more expensive for consumers, its power was not in the direct effect it had on consumer behaviour but in the way it incentivised producers to reformulate their drinks to avoid the levy,

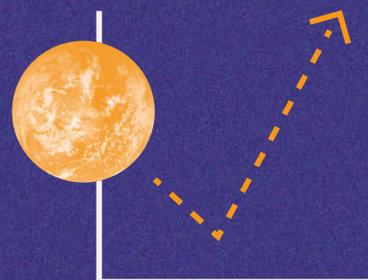
ultimately [reducing sugar consumption from sugary drinks](#) by 35 per cent on average. Better labelling, advertising bans and further levies could exploit a similar logic – moving enough health-conscious consumers to incentivise producers to reformulate their products, and supermarkets and restaurants to promote healthier foods.

Nesta will work with others to catalyse and accelerate these changes. We can form coalitions around a five-year target of reducing daily calorie intake. Together, we can identify the barriers to achieving this target and use Nesta's innovation methods to help overcome them. For example, we can use novel data science approaches to understand which foods and food categories would drive the highest return in terms of calories saved from reformulation. We can work directly with the public to understand perceptions of acceptability around government intervention – and what it would take to increase acceptance. We can help retailers and manufacturers experiment with portion sizes. We can collaborate with wholesalers to redesign their ordering platforms in a way that puts healthier food in shops, without compromising commercial performance.

**Area of exploration:  
Loneliness**

While loneliness has gained greater traction as a public health issue – and is [understood to be as harmful as smoking 15 cigarettes a day](#) – we do not yet understand the extent to which reducing loneliness would lower the associated health burden. Our initial work aims to help grow the evidence base on how loneliness drives ill health, in order to design new solutions that most effectively nurture the relationships that sustain people.

# A sustainable future



**Our mission is to accelerate the decarbonisation of household activities in the UK and improve levels of productivity.**

**Our goal is that, by 2030, the UK will have reduced household carbon emissions by 28 per cent from 2019 levels, and will be on track to reach zero by 2048.**

**The UK urgently needs to make progress on reducing emissions if it is to meet the legally binding goal to reach net-zero emissions by 2050 (2045 in Scotland).**

**At the same time, productivity in the UK is far below that of comparator countries. These challenges go hand in hand: an economy that succeeds in reducing emissions but does not protect or improve economic well-being is no more sustainable than one that is productive but fails to reduce emissions.**

**Our aim is to accelerate the UK's transition to a low-carbon, productive economy by cutting UK household emissions, and to reduce skills mismatches – a major factor in lost productivity – by using data-driven approaches to give people better information about their options as they navigate the labour market.**

**Our programmatic focus:  
Reducing household emissions**

Over the past decade, UK greenhouse gas emissions have fallen substantially as the UK has invested heavily in producing low-carbon electricity. In the next two decades, however, decarbonisation will mean more substantial changes for consumers. They will need to insulate their homes, move to electric cars, replace their gas boilers and help the grid by shifting electricity usage away from peak production times.

Our aim is to help rapidly accelerate the reduction of household emissions by 2030, and to ensure that policies and conditions are in place to support continued reduction from 2030 onwards. To achieve a 28 per cent cut in household emissions over the next decade, we need to save some 19 million tonnes of carbon dioxide (MtCO<sub>2</sub>e) per year by 2030, compared with 2019. Among other measures, this will require at least 5 million households to switch to low-carbon heating solutions, and over 10 million to install cavity wall, solid wall or floor insulation.

Nesta will explore many avenues to support this transition. We will look at increasing consumer take-up of low-carbon heating solutions, for example by using data science to identify households with a higher likelihood of adopting low-carbon heating, and by mobilising 'social referents' such as heat installers who may be the most credible group to influence levels of take-up. We will work with energy companies to test different business models that generate revenue by helping consumers reduce or

shift their energy consumption. We will help de-risk policy changes by testing the viability of new regulatory frameworks, or by using online and field experiments to test the potential benefits of financial incentives to change behaviours.

**Area of exploration:  
Productivity**

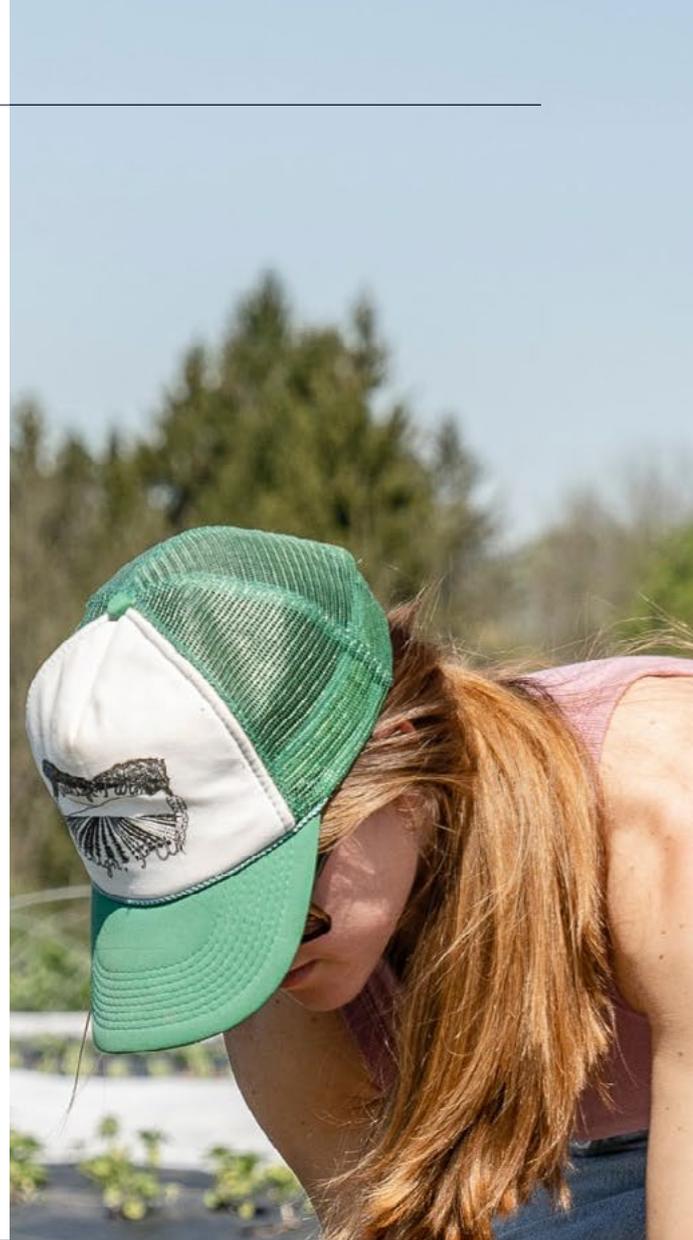
Since 2008, productivity growth in the UK has been slow, with knock-on effects for household incomes and economic inequality. People may resist climate action if they feel a green economy is leaving them behind. As we look to decarbonise the economy, we need to make sure it is productive and delivers a good standard of living for all.

Low productivity sectors like accommodation and food have been particularly hard-hit by COVID-19. Our work will build on Nesta's [Rapid Recovery Challenge Prize](#) and [Open Jobs Data](#) tools to support those who have lost work to find roles that use their skills and talents, and to retrain where appropriate. As well as supporting economic recovery, this work aims to tackle skills mismatches, one of the long-term problems behind poor UK productivity growth. OECD modelling suggests UK labour productivity could [increase by 5 per cent if skills mismatches were lowered to 'best practice' levels.](#)

Through Nesta's [Creative Industries Policy and Evidence Centre](#) we will continue to support the creative industries as a productive and growing part of the UK economy. The [Innovation Growth Lab](#) will continue to work with partners in the UK and internationally to build a rigorous evidence base for interventions and policies that address productivity.

# How we'll achieve our strategy

If we are to be successful in achieving our goals, we will need to overcome some of the most common barriers to innovation. Innovation typically involves three phases: a **design phase**, where a variety of new seeds are sown; a **testing phase**, which acts as a 'fitness mechanism', weeding out the weaker varieties; and a **scaling phase** that amplifies the best ideas and supports them to adapt, thrive and scale. Unfortunately, we often find barriers at every stage.



## Design

**First, we see challenges in the seeding of new ideas.** While practitioners in education, social care and health are constantly improvising and improving what they do, they often lack the time, resources and capacity to systematically analyse the context, draw on evidence of what works, or prototype new solutions. Consulting organisations may be brought in to solve problems or generate solutions, but the funding available is often not enough to allow them to conduct the exploratory research, and trial and error, needed to generate more radical solutions. While support for start-ups to pursue new ideas has grown, the degree of risk involved and a lack of support or patient capital at key moments can deter budding entrepreneurs from building new, impactful products and services.

## Test

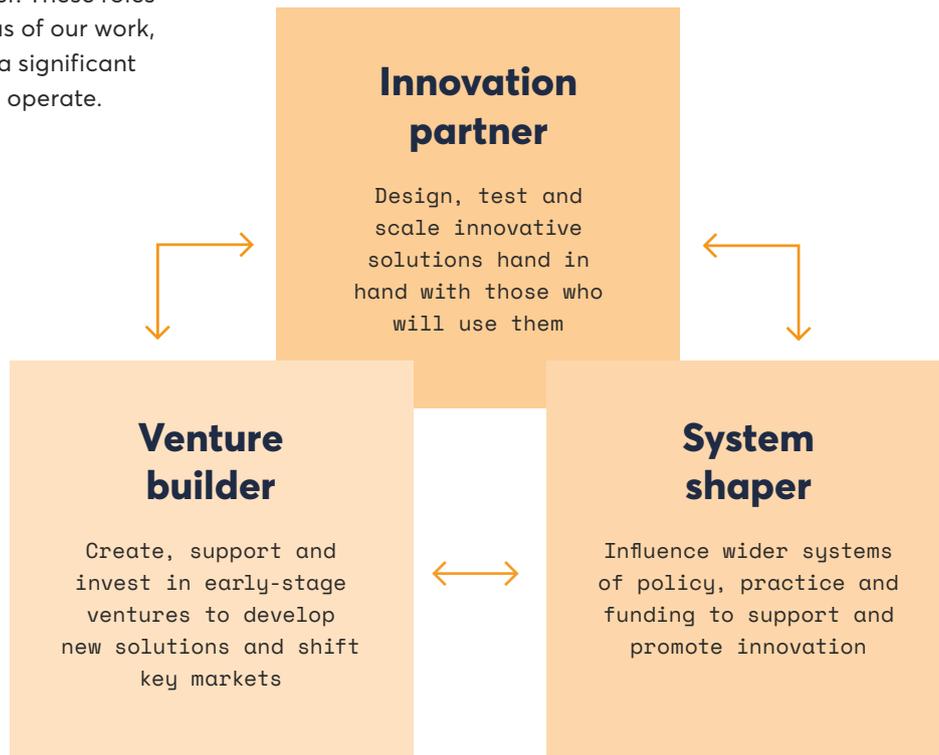
**Second, there is often a weak selection mechanism to identify the most promising solutions.** Rigorous evaluation - where experimental or quasi experimental methods are used to identify whether a solution has led to the desired impact - is still in its infancy in many fields. Such approaches may not be accessible to voluntary or private organisations working with a small client group or with limited funding, while academic partners may conduct small-scale studies but be less incentivised to take on larger-scale field trials, without which attempts to scale may fall flat.

## Scale

**Third, many promising solutions struggle to move beyond limited deployment and piloting.** Even when rigorous evidence for a new approach has been developed and communicated, it may not be widely adopted by practitioners in their daily habits and routines. Procurement and regulatory barriers may impede the ability of new ventures to scale and displace incumbents. The crucial combination of bottom-up momentum from a coalition of early adopters, alongside top-down support from government and regulators, may be absent.

# Our roles

To overcome these barriers, Nesta will take on three complementary roles: working as an innovation partner, a venture builder and a system shaper. These roles will be the focus of our work, and represent a significant shift in how we operate.



Our role

## Innovation partner

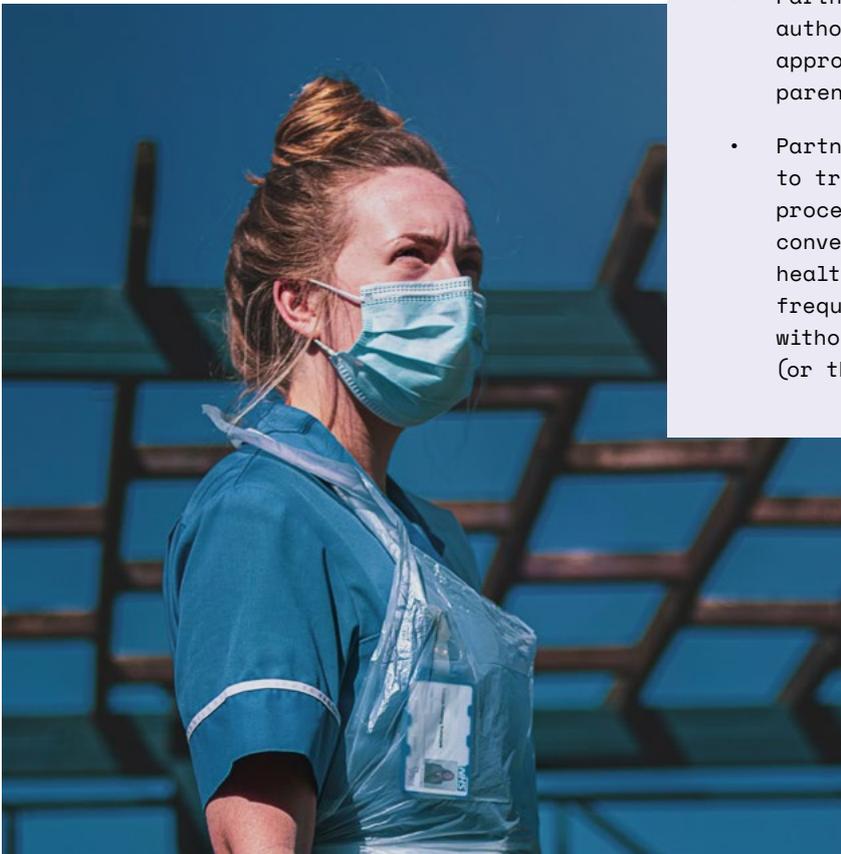
As an innovation partner, Nesta will work closely with frontline organisations across the UK – such as local authorities, chains of schools and GP networks – to design, test and scale new solutions. This includes long-term sustained collaborations as well as shorter-term partnerships on specific shared goals.

In these partnerships we will deploy multidisciplinary teams – including designers, behavioural scientists and data scientists – to immerse themselves in the relevant contexts and work hand in hand with our partners to generate solutions with the potential to change lives at scale. We will apply a range of research and experimental methods, drawing upon proven solutions in comparable situations, and engage closely at all stages with the lived realities of practitioners and people affected by the problems we are trying to solve.

Our partnerships will help us to ensure the ideas that are seeded are contextually grounded, relevant and the product of multiple perspectives and disciplines. Together with our partners, we will then test those ideas rigorously and weed out those with insufficient potential. We will design for scale from the start, forming partnerships with a view to replication and diffusion. We will look to spread proven solutions across each delivery partner's network, with support from early adopters. In parallel, we will work with policymakers and regulators to enable and support the scaling-up of what works, building both 'bottom-up' and 'top-down' momentum for change.

**For example, we may:**

- Partner with several local authorities to test new approaches to enrolling eligible parents in early years services.
- Partner with a major wholesaler to trial new sales and fulfilment processes. These will allow convenience stores to procure healthier alternatives to frequently purchased products, without negatively affecting their (or the wholesaler's) bottom line.



Our role

# Venture builder

Sometimes innovation requires a more radical departure from existing practice than is likely to be possible within large institutions. New and early-stage ventures have significant freedom to innovate, drawing on cutting-edge developments in different sectors. The rigours of the commercial market then act as a fitness mechanism, forcing ventures to iterate towards products and services for which there is significant demand from users or practitioners. Those that pass this test can then take an accelerated path to scale as revenue generated is reinvested in growth, and ventures are incentivised to move quickly to new markets.

Building successful, impactful ventures in pursuit of our missions means both creating new ventures from scratch and helping existing early-stage ventures to succeed.

Nesta's Venture Studio will create new ventures with the potential to generate long-term impact and value for users, communities and shareholders. Drawing on our work as an innovation partner and system shaper we will use our research to generate ideas, provide access to early users to refine solutions, and create unique 'sandbox' environments to smooth the way to market. [Nesta Impact Investments](#) will continue to invest in established early-stage ventures, building on a long history of successful impact investing. We will provide patient capital and support investees to achieve their impact objectives and potentially shift key markets, including through targeted partnerships that draw on Nesta's and investees' combined insights and expertise to achieve shared goals.

**For example, we may:**

- Through our work with early years service providers, prototype a product that effectively captures the attention of young children and supports their cognitive development, then create a new venture to develop it and bring it to market.
- Informed by our work on green household heating, invest in a challenger energy company that shifts consumer behaviour towards sustainable solutions, then partner with them to build an evidence base for policy change, drawing on their customer data.



Our role

# System shaper

There are different barriers to innovation in each of the fields we work in. A lack of risk capital can prevent good ideas from being seeded. Tough regulatory barriers and unhelpful public sector procurement practices can limit early adoption. Sometimes, innovations struggle to scale due to fragmented systems, a lack of funding for implementation and poor environments for peer networks or community-led initiatives. In some cases, all of these factors apply.

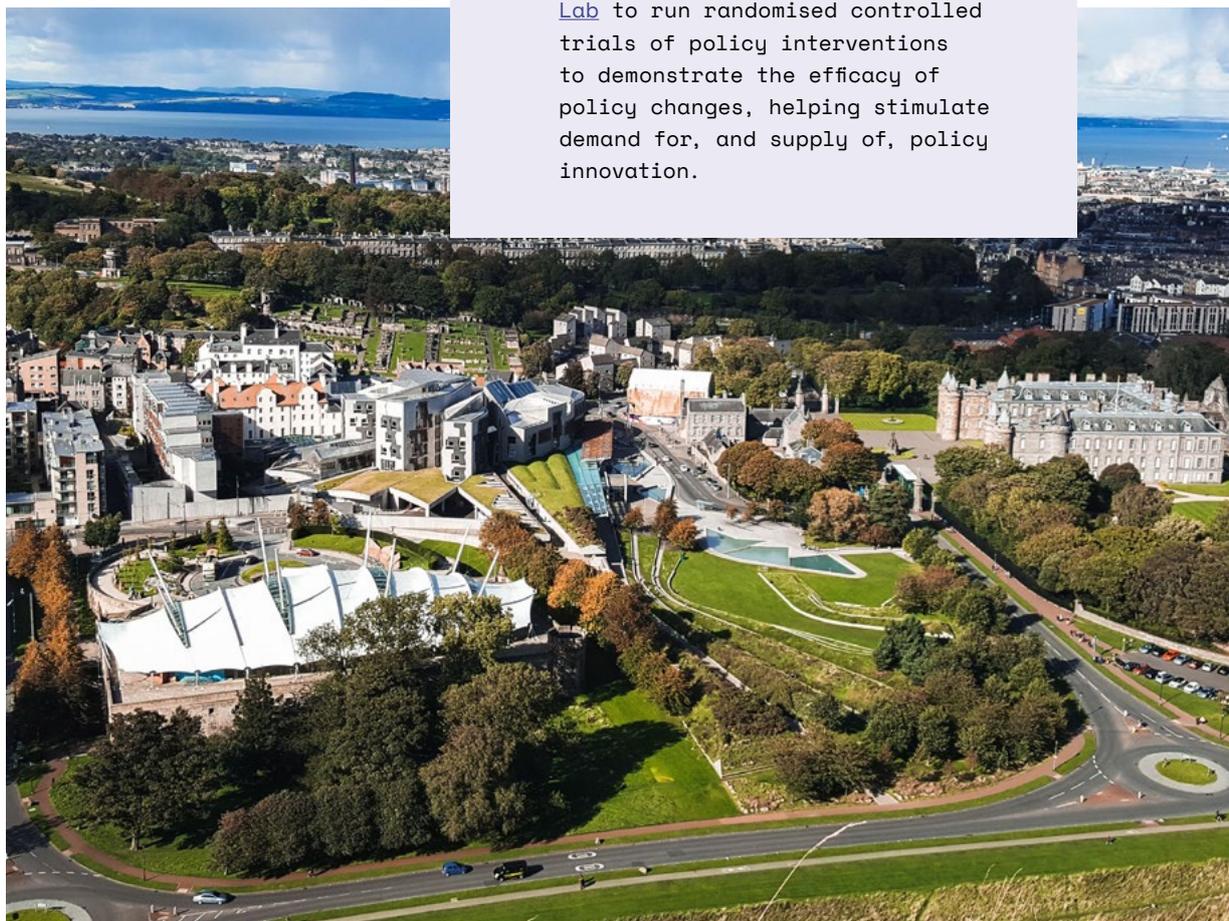
As well as contributing directly to new innovations in our mission areas, Nesta is therefore seeking to create an environment where innovation and learning are continually emerging – that is, helping to 'shape' those innovation systems. This may involve working with regulators to create sandboxes that allow for experimentation; generating evidence to define new fields and inform policy and resourcing (as we have done for the [creative industries](#)); incubating new institutions where there are key gaps (as we have done through [What Works Centres](#)); enabling

data sharing and improving data infrastructure; and supporting practitioners and citizens with mechanisms that improve transparency, choice and voice in the systems in which we work.

Success as a system shaper will help to magnify the impact of our efforts by removing the usual barriers to scaling that we encounter in our work as both an innovation partner and venture builder. It will also help to improve the environment for innovation in our mission areas independently of any Nesta intervention.

**For example, we may:**

- Map the local food environment and use simulators to engage people in imagining a healthier neighbourhood. This could influence local planning and zoning decisions and stimulate long-term demand for innovation.
- Work with the [Innovation Growth Lab](#) to run randomised controlled trials of policy interventions to demonstrate the efficacy of policy changes, helping stimulate demand for, and supply of, policy innovation.





### Nesta's role in shaping the innovation ecosystem

Throughout our [history](#), Nesta has played a pivotal role in supporting the growth and dynamism of the UK's innovation ecosystem, paving the way for a vast network of actors to succeed and disrupting markets and services for the better, in pursuit of social goals. For example, our work incubating [States of Change](#) and establishing the [Alliance for Useful Evidence](#) has promoted government innovation, helping civil servants design more human-centred solutions and better use of evidence to inform policymaking and practice.

As we focus our activity on three innovation missions going forward, the following enterprises that Nesta has incubated will continue to support and shape the innovation ecosystem in the UK and beyond. Their activity will have important benefits for our missions – with opportunities to leverage their expertise and blend their methods with others in pursuit of impact – and will help keep Nesta at the forefront of innovation globally.

**[Nesta Challenges:](#)** By offering financial rewards (alongside expertise, networks and public awareness) to whoever can first or most effectively solve a problem, challenge prizes de-risk the creation of breakthrough innovations. Nesta Challenges will continue to draw on its expertise and reputation in prize design to help Nesta and other organisations around the world to promote innovation and help diverse innovators thrive.

### **[People Powered Results:](#)**

Place-based and people-focused approaches have too often been overlooked in systems-change efforts, a key reason why top-down reform alone often fails to achieve its potential. People Powered Results will continue to work with local and national actors to create the conditions and cultures required to rapidly adopt new innovations and scale what works.

### **[Innovation Growth Lab:](#)**

To meet productivity goals and help economies be more innovative, a more experimental approach to policymaking is needed. The Innovation Growth Lab, led by Nesta in collaboration with government partners, works globally to promote experimentation and ensure that innovation and growth policy is informed by new ideas and robust evidence.

# What we'll need to be successful

To succeed, Nesta must excel in five areas: people and culture, innovation expertise, risk-tolerant capital, convening power, and focus and flexibility.



## People and culture

The primary determinant of our success is the quality and diversity of the people we attract, retain and recruit, and the culture in which we work.

We seek to attract talented people to form high-performing teams in a culture that is diverse and inclusive. We are committed to increasing representation of staff from minoritised and lower socio-economic backgrounds at all levels, and to becoming a stand-out employer for the development opportunities we provide. This includes developing expertise in our disciplines and methods to a degree normally associated with top consultancies or academic training; a feedback-rich culture; opportunities to build an outstanding network; and career progression opportunities, both within and outside of Nesta.

Our shared culture will be reinforced through who we hire and promote, how we reward success and failure, the stories we tell and the routines we share.

## Innovation expertise

Tackling the big societal challenges faced by the UK will require us to draw on a range of innovation methods, bringing the best of each to bear. Drawing on each method in the right way at the right time will generate more grounded, more creative, more rigorous and, ultimately, more effective ideas and solutions.

Nesta's approach to innovation builds on deep expertise in data science, design, behavioural science, arts, collective intelligence and experimental research, brought together in multidisciplinary teams. This will be enriched by diverse perspectives and the varied expertise of academics, practitioners and those with lived experience of the issues we seek to address.

### Nesta's shared culture

Our shared culture is built around four values:

**We are impact-led:** We have ambitious goals and we are pragmatic about how we achieve them. We know when to be rigorous, and when to be scrappy. We put our purpose above our egos.

**We are inquisitive:** We find no idea too laughable, or too boring. We constantly invite challenge while being kind in our critiques. We have an unquenchable thirst to learn and to stretch ourselves.

**We are incisive:** We follow our hunches but are ready to pivot. We like to make abstract ideas as concrete as possible. We know when to aim for good enough or perfect.

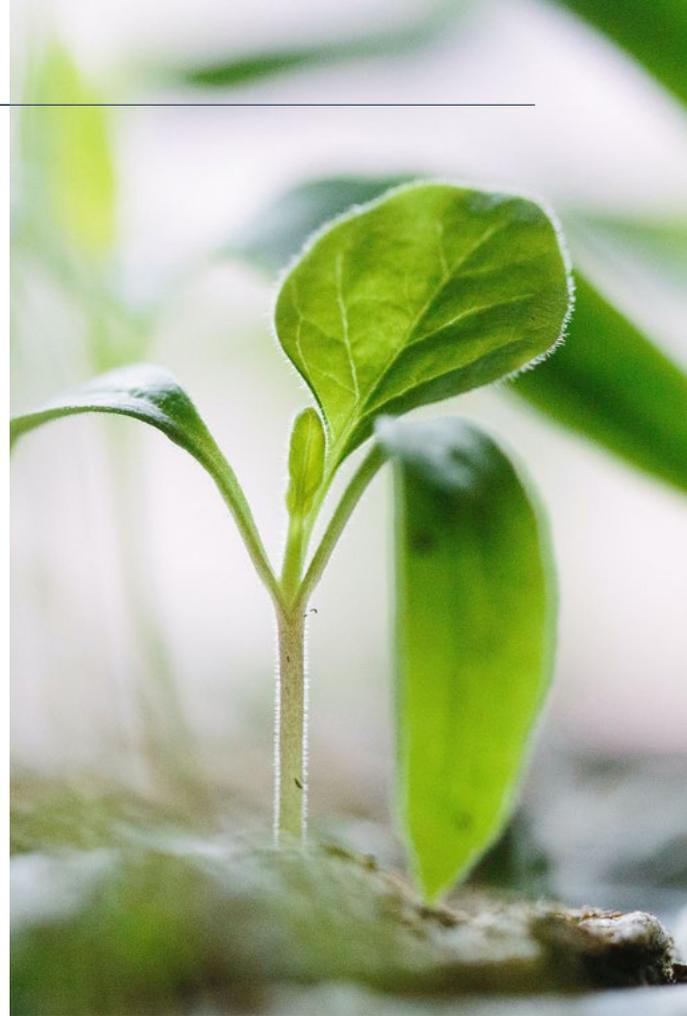
**We are inclusive:** We shape our ideas with those who are impacted by our work. We make our work accessible to all. We love debate and disagreement but collectively own our decisions.



## Risk-tolerant capital

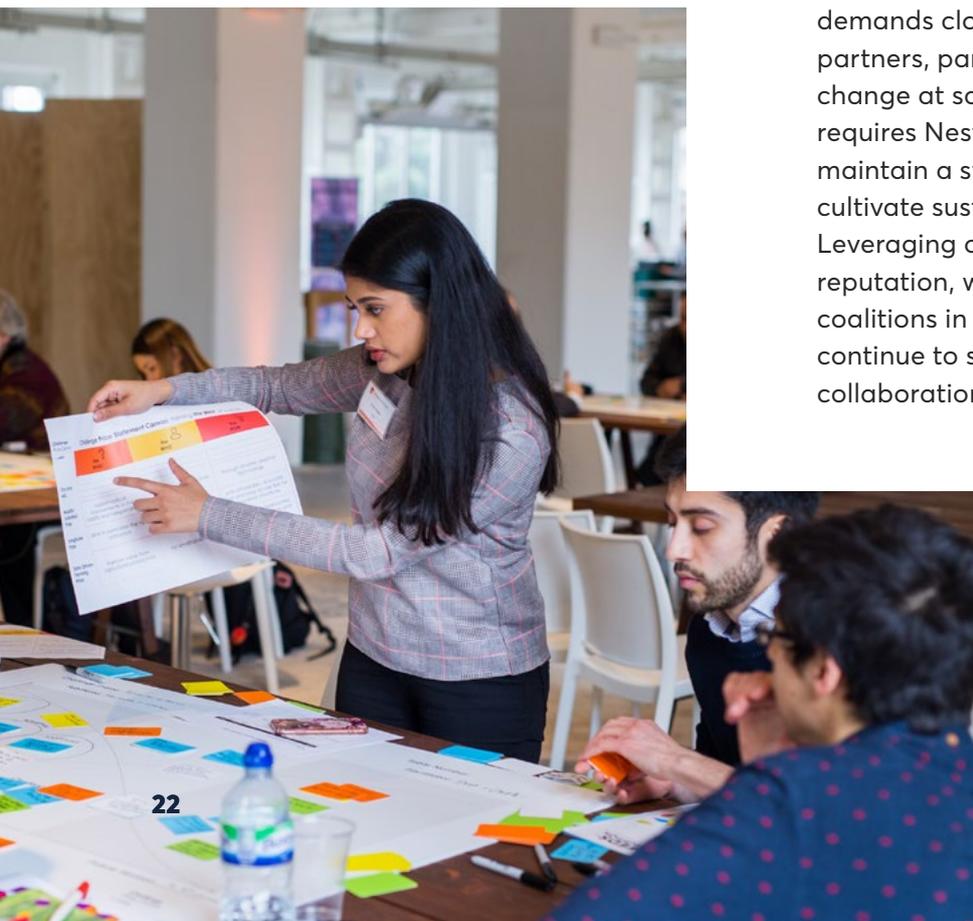
We will use our endowment strategically to take risks, make big bets and scale what works. For early-stage work, we will primarily look to use our own resources, or those of others (foundations and governments) who are prepared to deploy money for exploratory, high-risk work. For taking solutions to scale, we aim to influence mainstream public service funding or regulation, or create (or shift) business models that are self-financing.

We see an important role for invested capital to play in achieving our missions, and will continue to invest portions of Nesta's endowment to support new and early-stage ventures. We will create and invest in new ventures through our Venture Studio and will continue to invest in early-stage, growing companies through [Nesta Impact Investments](#), which has established a strong track record over almost two decades of investment activity. We will continue to lead the way in [arts and culture finance](#), including through our ongoing commitment to the [Arts and Culture Impact Fund](#).



## Convening power

Everything we aim to achieve in this strategy demands close collaboration with a range of partners, particularly our aspirations to drive change at scale. Convening powerful coalitions requires Nesta to demonstrate credibility, maintain a strong external reputation and cultivate sustained, trusted relationships. Leveraging our independence, resources and reputation, we will form unique cross-sector coalitions in support of our missions, and will continue to stimulate and challenge with novel collaborations.



# Focus and flexibility

Achieving greater focus by aligning Nesta's work around three missions is at the heart of this strategy – enabling us to bring the best of Nesta to bear on our missions, and to see innovations all the way through to scale. At the same time, remaining alive to new ideas, themes and opportunities (along with intellectual curiosity and playfulness) is part of Nesta's DNA, and can unearth new approaches and areas of work that will magnify impact over time.

To balance our increased focus with flexibility, we will:

- Actively pursue specific areas of exploration within our missions, giving us the opportunity to potentially change focus over time as we learn more.
- Systematically scan for emerging trends, technologies and interventions through Nesta's new Discovery Hub, helping us to anticipate and respond to shifts in the external landscape. The hub will also create dedicated space for exploratory work, test the potential of novel ideas and methods, and build and share intelligence on the cutting edge of innovation.
- Ensure we allocate resources flexibly over time in pursuit of fixed goals, informed by rigorous measurement and evaluation, and supported by a culture that is obsessed with impact, celebrates good failures and is ready and willing to pivot.

## Our commitments to equity, diversity and inclusion

Alongside this strategy, we have committed to [nine measurable goals to advance equity, diversity and inclusion \(ED&I\)](#) through our work and within our workplace. These goals range from the diversity of our staff, the culture of our organisation and how we measure the impact of our work, to how we use our innovation capabilities to help close the evidence gap and advance ED&I efforts globally. We use leading metrics and evidence-based practices to substantiate our goals, as detailed in our ED&I strategy.

We have more to do to become a more inclusive innovator and employer. As we strive to achieve the nine goals, we intend to share publicly our learnings, failings, questions and progress. We will invite collaboration and challenge as we commit to the shared goal of greater ED&I in our organisation, both in the field of innovation for social good and in society.

## Join us

**Nesta's vision is that, by 2030, we will have significantly improved the lives of millions of people. This is ambitious, but we are confident that large-scale change is possible. Our strategy sets a clear destination, and maps out the beginnings of a path to get us there.**

Should we succeed, it will be by standing on the shoulders of trailblazers, allies and critical friends who have encouraged, informed and challenged Nesta's work since our launch in 1998 with a public endowment from the National Lottery. We draw inspiration and support from the shared purpose and spirit of possibility, collaboration and generosity that we find every day across the social impact sector.

We cannot do this alone. We seek the engagement of multiple partners, and in return commit to working openly, sharing our successes and failures, and challenging ourselves to do whatever it takes to achieve our goals.

While the world we operate in will doubtless change rapidly and we will need to change with it, our guiding vision will remain constant. Whether you are a frontline practitioner, policymaker, private company or innovator, we are looking for partners, friends and collaborators to develop ideas, test them rigorously and scale what works.



**We hope you share our vision and will join us as we seek to improve the lives of millions of people through innovation.**

Get involved:

**[www.nesta.org.uk/2030](http://www.nesta.org.uk/2030)**

# Our strategy

## Purpose

We design, test and scale new solutions to society's biggest problems.

## Vision

By 2030, Nesta will have significantly improved the lives of millions of people. Combining rigour and creativity, we will be a world leader in driving innovation for social good.

## Missions

### A fairer start

Our mission is to narrow the outcome gap between children growing up in disadvantage and the national average.

### A healthy life

Our mission is to increase the average number of healthy years lived in the UK, particularly for those most affected by health inequalities.

### A sustainable future

Our mission is to accelerate the decarbonisation of household activities in the UK and improve levels of productivity.

## Roles

### System shaper

Influence wider systems of policy, practice and funding to support and promote innovation.

### Innovation partner

Design, test and scale innovative solutions hand in hand with those who will use them.

### Venture builder

Create, support and invest in early-stage ventures to develop new solutions and shift key markets.