

BSA STRATEGY 2024 – 2028



Our Charitable Objectives

The advancement of public education by the promotion and diffusion of the knowledge of sociology by lectures, publications, the promotion and publication of research and encouragement of contact between workers in all relevant fields of enquiry.

Our Guiding Principles

Deliver what is possible.

Focus on the membership experience.

Our Core Values

Compassionate

Inclusive

Supportive

Thoughtful

Activities

1. Review our range of activities and the systems we use to service them and seek to balance these against the resources we have.
2. Assess what best serves our charitable objectives and what is most valued by our members and direct our attention to those activities.
3. Close some activities to focus on what is important and achievable.
4. Seek to do more with and for the membership whilst continuing to speak up for the discipline in a targeted way which reflects our core values.

Context

The BSA faced two challenges over the last three years: the COVID pandemic and the impact of the Open Access policies for journal articles on BSA income. Both challenges have raised existential questions for the Association and posed problems for its long-term financial viability.

To meet the challenge of COVID, the BSA adopted a survival mode, focusing on keeping the organisation running and consolidating what we could offer to members. Actions here included reducing the number of office staff from 15 to 10, shifting to new forms of working and moving as much activity online as possible.

Open Access, while offering greater access to the articles published in the BSA journals, fundamentally alters the revenue stream the BSA receives from its partner publisher Sage. At points, it seemed possible that revenue could be so reduced that the future of the BSA, in its current form, was in doubt. Contract negotiations with Sage in 2023 have secured as stable a future as possible, ensuring that the BSA has a steady, though reduced, income until 2027.

Coming out of the worst of the COVID pandemic, and having gained some financial security, the BSA can turn its attention outwards again to fully focus on the needs of its members in what, for many, are highly uncertain times.

British sociology is in a contradictory position. On the one hand, sociology is the fifth most popular A-level in England, with high numbers of students enrolling in sociology courses at university level. On the other hand, some sociology departments face either cuts or closure, with many BSA members experiencing high workloads, precarious working conditions, loss of personal income and other pressures.

Our strategy is therefore informed by the discipline's current position and by feedback from members through individual conversations and in meetings with different groups of members. The focus falls firmly on enhancing what it means to be a member of the BSA and speaking up for sociology, framed by the time, legal and financial restraints in which we must operate. To that end, the BSA will concentrate its activities on a specific range of activities in line with its resources.

Our Plans

We will begin the strategic cycle with some very practical initiatives for our membership including holding membership fees at 2023 rates for 2024; reducing fees for our student community; developing new ways of recognising long-standing members; and exploring career-supporting expert training for our members.

During the term, we will replace our website and CRM (which are coming to the end of their lifecycle), condensing and amalgamating the best of our website resources into one place.

We will also invest in better communications to help us be more effective when we are speaking with members and when we are speaking up for the discipline.

Enacting our plans will include reviewing what we do now, being bold about ending activities which are less effective, and investing in activities which are more effective.

Strategic Objectives

The strategic objectives of the BSA are listed below. Examples of the activities and initiatives that the BSA will discuss and develop, *if we can*, are also provided.

To enhance the membership experience of the BSA

- Set membership fees that recognise the financial circumstances of BSA members, as much as possible.
- Explore the creation of an associate membership category.
- Provide more training experiences for postgraduate and early career BSA members.
- Provide more careers advice and support for all BSA members.
- Make all BSA annual conferences in-person, inclusive and the focal point of the academic year for sociologists, responding to member feedback and external factors.
- Explore new ways of recognising long-standing membership.
- Organise more online and in-person events for members focused on specific and topical issues.
- Devise and implement codes of conduct that seek to foster inclusivity for all BSA members.

To improve communication between all constituencies of the BSA and with wider society

- Establish a communications role within the BSA office to create and coordinate internal and external communications.
- Invite participant observers from the Advisory Forum to attend BSA Board meetings.
- Foster higher levels of interaction between trustees and members by creating and publicising new two-way channels of communication.

- Refresh and revitalise the members' magazine, *Network*.
- Develop an effective and cost-effective digital presence.

To manage the long-term sustainability of the BSA

- Plan for the changing financial and social circumstances in which we operate.
- Manage our assets for the long-term benefit of the BSA and its members.
- Increase involvement at school and college level to ensure the uptake of sociology courses at colleges and universities.
- Create additional revenue streams.
- Support our study groups to ensure the continual development of innovation and research in the discipline.
- Support the editorial teams of our journals and book series to publish innovative research and showcase the importance of sociology to wider societies.
- Support journal initiatives which increase international representation within the journals to widen knowledge sharing and representation within our discipline.
- Pursue the best contract for BSA journals that enables the work of editorial teams, providing them with the necessary support and infrastructure to achieve their aims.

Putting Our Plans into Action

The Board of Trustees has eight sub-committees and we have allocated responsibility for taking forward our strategic objectives across these committees. Broadly, the sub-committees cover the following areas:

- Membership
- Annual Conference
- Publications
- Equality, Diversity and Inclusion
- Public Engagement
- Schools
- Governance
- Finance

Different initiatives may require consultation with various stakeholders and members can expect to see this reflected in communications as our plans are enacted over the five-year period.