

Enterprise & Business Growth Workplan 2024/25



Project Name	Project Description	Actions/Targets	Timeline and Milestones	Budget
<p>Starting a business</p>	<p>Through the Enterprise Support Service (“Go Succeed”), we will deliver a flexible menu of support to drive new more start-ups. The service aims to attract more people into the “pipeline” and to help more growth-focused start-ups to get the help they need to grow and scale. The ability to attract more people into the “pipeline” will require innovative approaches, particularly where there is a need for cultural change amongst under-represented groups.</p>	<p>362 participants engaged</p> <p>119 new businesses created, supporting 143 new jobs</p> <p>50% engagement with female entrepreneurs</p> <p>10% engagement with participants in the social economy sector</p>	<p>April 2024 – March 2025</p>	<p>To support delivery of the numbers highlighted above, Belfast City Council will make a payment of £314,415 in match funding to the PMO. The main funder of this work is DLUHC, using Shared Prosperity Funding</p>
<p>Growing a Business</p>	<p>The Enterprise Support Service also includes growth support for existing businesses. As with the start-up support, this will be more flexible and in keeping with business needs. We will also work to deliver a series of workshops and events on issues such as financial planning and forecasting, e-commerce essentials, sales and marketing, accessing finance, writing a winning bid, strategy and business planning. We will also establish a range of peer support networks to target under-represented groups including minority ethnic groups and female entrepreneurs. Go Succeed grants will continue to support this work.</p>	<p>760 individuals engaged</p> <p>171 new jobs created</p> <p>114 grants awarded to support growing businesses</p> <p>50% engagement with female entrepreneurs</p> <p>10% engagement with participants in the social economy sector</p>		

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<p>Scaling Support and Innovation</p>	<p>Research identifies the need to focus on key technologies and priority sectors. These include Fintech and Financial Services, Creative and Digital, Life and Health Sciences, and Advanced Manufacturing, as well as identifying opportunities as part of the green transition and a drive for more sustainable investment. Working with the City Innovation Team, we are delivering a new intervention to build capacity among local businesses, with a particular focus on helping them to access challenge funds and alternative funding sources, including those coming from the Belfast Region City Deal. We will also continue to work with key partners including Digital Catapult, Ulster University, Queen’s University, Catalyst, and Invest NI to increase the number of innovation driven enterprises and scaling businesses. This will include support for investment in the Way to Scale Programme. This is an MIT-based intervention that has been successful in significantly enhancing the growth and innovation ambitions of local businesses. We are working with Catalyst and Invest NI to create a collective funding allocation to support delivery – with the expectation that participating businesses will also contribute towards programme costs. Catalyst will act as the contract lead for this intervention and all expenditure will be managed through them.</p>	<p>230 companies engaged through bespoke digital and creative programmes.</p> <p>Develop advanced media production capacity building programme to support local SMEs to avail of Studio Ulster facilities and opportunities.</p> <p>Increasing awareness and access to new collaboration, innovation and finance/funding opportunities for Belfast based SMEs.</p> <p>Support 30 SMEs access finance to support investment and growth through the Digital Transformation Flexible Fund (DTFF).</p>	<p>April 2024 – March 2025</p>	<p>£100,000</p>

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<p>Social Enterprise and Cooperative Development</p>	<p>In the next financial year, we will refine our social economy action plan based on research and engagement with sector partners such as SENI, Cooperative Alternatives and Trademark. A continued area of activity will be the administration of the financial incentive working alongside Community Finance Ireland (CFI). This is a hybrid funding model (part loan; part grant funding) to improve the financial management skills of new and growing social enterprises. Belfast City Council will make an allocation of up to £60,000 towards the grant element (likely to be up to 25% of overall financial awards to social enterprises) while the remaining element 75% will come from CFI in the form of a loan. In addition to the new financial mechanism, a budget of £120,000 has been set aside for dedicated social enterprise and co-operative support. This will cover a range of support interventions including mentoring, workshops, and events. Social Enterprise support will also underpin the Enterprise Support Service with a target of 10% engagement with participants from the social economy sector.</p>	<p>Increase participation rates by long term unemployed, economically inactive, and other underrepresented groups such as females, young people, and migrants.</p> <p>At least 240 individuals/organisations engaged</p> <p>Facilitate 3 best practice knowledge sharing events</p> <p>Deliver 6 outreach sessions</p> <p>Deliver 1 cooperative outreach session</p> <p>50 client referrals to “Go Succeed” intervention to complete business planning/generic business advice</p>	<p>April 2024 – March 2025</p>	<p>£180,000</p>

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<p>Supporting events</p>	<p>Sponsorship support for conferences and events that support the objectives and ambitions of the council’s Enterprise and Business Growth activity. Applications will be considered on a rolling basis and officers will undertake an assessment process to measure and score these requests based on their alignment to the “Our Economy” pillar of the Belfast Agenda, the contribution to the work of the team as set out in this report and the potential to profile the Council activities and generate interest and demand for the services.</p>	<p>Objectives and outputs will be agreed through a funding agreement with the event organisers. This approach has been effective in the past and has helped ensure that our resources are focused on areas of maximum return. Any events that will have wider corporate impact will be brought back to the relevant Committee for consideration and endorsement.</p>	<p>April 2024 – March 2025</p>	<p>£62,000 (each application capped at a maximum of £10,000)</p>
<p>Investing in Belfast</p>	<p>We will continue to build on our partnerships in London and Dublin to develop co-operation and investment promotion opportunities for mutual benefit.</p> <p>Following development of the strategy and action plan, the work on the Dublin-Belfast Economic Corridor will focus on delivery of key interventions within the plan, supported by the recruitment of dedicated support staff. Belfast City Council will contribute £35,000 towards the work, which is being led by Newry, Mourne and Down District Council who are acting as the chair and secretariat to the partnership. The partnership will also work to complete the feasibility studies on innovation and circular economy that have been funded through the Shared Island Unit.</p>	<p>Two City to City visits aiming to facilitate knowledge exchange.</p> <p>Continuing to work on the analysis of the completed feasibility studies leading to the development of a new programme.</p>	<p>April 2024 – March 2025</p>	<p>£35,000 contribution to annual workplan, payable to NMDDC as lead council</p>

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Belfast Business Promise	Continue to recruit new organisations to sign up to the Belfast Business Promise	50 new supporters signed up	By March 2025	
	Progression of supporter organisations through the accreditation process	Site visits carried out to verify evidence presented in reports and support improvement Technical panel sittings	Ongoing Quarterly meetings	
	Design and delivery of Promise Learning days addressing key issues and gaps identified by supporter organisations to support progression. Ensure Go Succeed supports are layered into BBP supporter offer and consider Learning Days in light of this	6 Promise Learning days delivered	Ongoing	
	BCC Internal Working Group meetings to identify and progress improvement actions to ensure that BCC reach Ambassador status by Autumn 2024	Bi-monthly meetings	October/ November 24	
	Undertake evaluation of progress to date and make recommendations around next steps in terms of approach and resourcing	Independent evaluation to be commissioned summer 2024; complete Autumn 2024	Evaluate complete Autumn 2024	Programme budget approved

Financial & Resource Implications

The activities outlined within this report will be resourced through the existing Enterprise and Business Growth budget for 2024/25.

Work area	Amount
Starting a Business (Including Social Enterprise and Co-operatives)	£621,823
Growing a Business, Scaling and Innovation	£438,230
Investing in Belfast (including DBEC and City of London engagement)	£78,300
Contribution to events and conferences	£62,000
Belfast Business Promise	£50,000
Economic Development Research & Tender Ads	£61,000