



Subject:	Enterprise Support Service update				
Date:	7 August 2024				
Reporting Officer:	John Greer, Director of Economic Development				
Contact Officer:	Cathy Keenan, Programme Lead, NIESS Margie McKay, Enterprise and Business Growth Manager				
Restricted Reports					
Is this report restricted?		Yes	<input type="checkbox"/>	No	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
If Yes, when will the report become unrestricted?					
After Committee Decision			<input type="checkbox"/>		
After Council Decision			<input type="checkbox"/>		
Some time in the future			<input type="checkbox"/>		
Never			<input type="checkbox"/>		
Call-in					
Is the decision eligible for Call-in?		Yes	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	No	<input type="checkbox"/>
1.0	Purpose of Report				
1.1	The purpose of this report is to update members on the Enterprise Support Service (Go Succeed) – the regional initiative to support business start-up and growth that is being led by Belfast City Council on behalf of the 11 councils.				
2.0	Recommendations				
2.1	Members are asked to: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Note and endorse the progress to date on the delivery of the Enterprise Support Service across Belfast and beyond, with the objective of driving more and better businesses• Note the pending end date of the current funding in March 2025 and the lack of clarity around future resource availability at this point• Agree to support the work to secure resources for delivery beyond March 2025.				

3.0	Main Report
3.1	At the August 2023 meeting of this Committee, members were provided with an update on progress to operationalise and deliver the Enterprise Support Service which has been branded as Go Succeed. Since the last update, the service was successfully launched and has now been operational for around eight months.
3.2	By way of background, members will recall that Belfast City Council led on a successful funding application to UK Shared Prosperity Fund (SPF). This provided £17 million of support for the period to March 2025; £12 million programme delivery and £5 million for small grants. Following receipt of the funding agreement in September 2023, the service became operational in November 2023.
3.3	The new service aims to be the go-to source for expert business advice across the region. It represents the councils' collective response to our statutory responsibility and offers a set of connected enterprise support services where individuals, entrepreneurs or businesses can access a continuum of support to meet their needs, depending on their stage of development.
3.4	<p>The key objectives of the model are to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Nurture a strong entrepreneurial culture, recognising enterprise as a viable career option and/or a route out of economic inactivity • Enable a vibrant and productive business base across Northern Ireland • Increase the proportion of 'innovation-active' businesses in NI and embed this more firmly with enterprise/ start-up agenda • Diversify the representation amongst those supported by the enterprise and innovation ecosystem • Delivery a service designed with the user in mind • Focus on adding value to existing support available in the ecosystem • Providing regional coverage while ensuring that delivery reflects local differences/nuances.
3.5	Go Succeed provides a continuum of support from early-stage enterprise awareness through to starting, growing, and scaling a business. The concept was that the service would help people get the right support at the right time – and would also help maximise other available funding streams by helping businesses to navigate the complex support ecosystem.

3.6	<p>The service has been established to deliver across three core areas – Start, Grow and Scale – with tailored support for clients aligned with their growth ambitions.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Start: this element of the service aims to identify individuals with entrepreneurial intentions as well as reaching those individuals who do not have an intention to start a business but could be encouraged to do so. There is specific, targeted support for a range of underrepresented groups. The menu of support available includes masterclasses, peer support networks and 1-1 mentoring • Grow: this element of the service provides support for existing businesses. 1-1 mentoring is allocated based on the business' potential to grow and innovate. Masterclass and peer support network activity are also provided to support existing businesses to make key decisions on issues such as entering new markets or accessing finance for growth • Scale: this part of the service is geared to supporting start-ups that have the potential to go on and generate at least £1m in revenue after 3 years. Support is delivered through 1-1 mentoring which aims to enable access to finance or further support through Invest NI, Catalyst or others.
3.7	<p>In addition to the tiered menu of support, small grants of up to £4,000 (and up to 70% of capital/revenue costs) are available to entrepreneurs or businesses accessing support through the service who demonstrate growth potential.</p>
3.8	<p>The delivery is underpinned by investments such as a wide-reaching marketing and communications campaign; a call handling service to deal with phone enquiries as well as an online portal to deal with online requests for support and a regional CRM system to enable tracking of client engagement across the service.</p>
3.9	<p><u>Regional Performance Update</u></p> <p>Since the service launched in November 2023, we have achieved the following by way of regional performance:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 18,793 individuals 'reached' through a range of community outreach activities • 3,204 individuals/entrepreneurs supported through start up activity (1-1 mentoring, masterclasses, peer support networks) • 2,514 businesses supported through growth activity 1-1 mentoring, masterclasses, peer support networks) • 176 entrepreneurs/businesses have accessed Go Succeed Grants since the launch in February 2024.

3.10	<p>The service provides an opportunity for councils to deliver a consistent approach to enterprise, start up and growth provision across the region. However it also has the flexibility to adapt to meet the specific needs of entrepreneurs and businesses within local areas. To achieve this, councils have developed local-level annual service plans which identify key areas of focus for outreach and delivery activities. This can include interventions to increase participation and address specific barriers faced by certain under-represented groups including females, individuals with a disability, ethnic minorities etc. It can also allow for targeted sector support activities such as those aimed at the tourism and hospitality sector or creative and digital sector support.</p>
3.11	<p><u>Belfast Performance Update</u></p> <p>Since the service launched in November 2023, we have achieved the following by way of Belfast performance:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 1,984 individuals 'reached' through a range of community outreach activities. This has included: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Increasing awareness of enterprise among young people at the Young Enterprise Big Market event in St George's Market ○ Development and delivery of an Inclusive Enterprise Pathway programme. This has involved delivery of 20 workshops and more than 700 individuals were engaged between October 2023 and March 2024. Participants insights from these sessions highlighted positive levels of engagement from females, ethnic minorities, and individuals with disabilities when compared to other mainstream enterprise programmes • From January-March 2024, the Enterprise and Business Growth team also delivered inclusive mentoring support to 15 individuals with further barriers to engagement. Delivery included a series of group sessions supplemented with 10 hours of 1-1 mentoring and provision of small grant funds for personal development and business supports. The team continues to engage with representatives of key organisations to raise awareness of, and inform, enterprise support initiatives • 523 Belfast entrepreneurs supported through start up activity (1-1 mentoring, masterclasses, peer support networks) • 481 Belfast businesses supported through growth activity (1-1 mentoring, masterclasses, peer support networks).

3.12	82 Belfast businesses have accessed Go Succeed Grants since the launch in February 2024, drawing down over £300,000. These grants have enabled businesses to purchase capital and/or revenue items which will support their future growth plans.
3.13	<p>Critical to the service is the ability to deliver place-based activity and to be responsive to the needs of the local business community. In Belfast, there has been a series of targeted masterclasses for businesses in the tourism and hospitality sector. We have also put in place a number of information and support sessions to help businesses access other support services such as the Digital Transformation Flexible Fund and have organised support clinics to help businesses interested in exploring new markets and introducing new technologies into their business. For the year ahead, planned activity includes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Establishing, and building upon, relationships with key stakeholders across the city to put in place targeted interventions to engage with under-represented groups and work to overcome the barriers to starting or growing a business for those groups ○ Working with the council's Culture and Tourism teams to support a neighbourhood tourism programme promoting innovation and entrepreneurship across all city neighbourhoods and helping bring forward new tourism products ○ Continuing to raise awareness of the Social Economy sector, encouraging and supporting new and existing social enterprises and co-operatives ○ Partnering with the council's Employability and Skills team to target self-employed sectors, including childminding, and delivering bespoke academies to break down barriers to self-employment.
3.14	Looking ahead, it is critical that funding is secured to enable this service to continue. The SPF funding is currently scheduled to run out in March 2025 and there is no clarity as to the future SPF funding approach beyond this date. There has been some engagement with the Department for the Economy (DfE) and the Minister has been vocal in his support for the service. However, at this point, DfE is not making a financial contribution to support the delivery of NIESS – although councils are using some of resources allocated to them from central government for the delivery of their statutory duty to provide start-up support as their match funding contribution to the overall funding pot.
3.15	<p><u>Financial & Resource Implications</u></p> <p>Belfast City Council is currently acting as the lead council on behalf of the 11 councils for delivery of the service. To do so, we have established a delivery and management team which is fully resourced through the SPF funding. The overall indicative SPF budget is in the</p>

3.16	<p>region of £5 million revenue in year 1 and £7 million revenue in year 2, with around £5 million available across the funding period for grant support.</p> <p><u>Equality or Good Relations Implications/Rural Needs Assessment</u></p> <p>An equality impact assessment for the service has been completed. Local targets for delivery in each council area have been established and will be part of the contractual commitments with delivery partners.</p>
4.0	Appendices
	N/A