

Appendix 1: Detail on 2021/22 Enterprise and Business Growth activity

Enterprise awareness activity

- Engaged 760 individuals through awareness supporting them to progress to start a business
- We continue to extend our reach to engage those individuals who are underrepresented in terms of entrepreneurship, providing them with support to overcome barriers to take positive steps to starting a business. For example, we engaged with 143 females providing them with mentoring and access to networks in partnership with Women in Business, we supported 40 individuals who were economically inactive and 50 students and graduates accessed support, 15 are currently accessing salary support through Invest NI Student to First Sale.

Start a Business

- 656 individuals engaged in business start-up activity, 454 of those developed a business plan through the Go For It programme, supporting the creation of 279 jobs
- We provided additional support to 75 individuals through 1-1 mentoring and access to incentives of £1,500 to help kick start their business
- We also enabled test trading opportunities for 49 new businesses through our dedicated start up space at St George's Market

Support for Social Enterprises and Co-operatives

- 56 organisations were supported with one-to-one mentoring, advice and guidance. Six of these organisations were new co-operatives
- We have undertaken targeted engagement work to increase the level of interest in developing co-operatives. We organised 6 events, attracting 129 attendees across 21-22 year. We facilitated 4 regional networking events as well as a global best practice visit
- The Social Economy Incentive Fund launched October 2021 with both rounds of this now completed. We received 45 applications, shortlisted 21 to pitch and chose 11 winners to receive a share of £60,000, two of which received £10,000
- We provided opportunities for 13 social enterprises to test trade at the social economy mini markets hosted at St George's Market
- We have been developing our outreach and engagement to increase awareness of the sector and delivered two pilot projects for youth to explore social economy: one project is delivered through schools and one through community groups. The school's youth pilot began in December 2021 with 4 schools recruited city wide attracting 59 students in total

and the community pilot began in March 2022 with 5 community groups recruited (North/East/West)

- An application has also been submitted to SENI to become the first Northern Ireland Social Enterprise Place, pending decision.

Growing a Business

- Through our business growth support, we have worked with 327 businesses through one-to-many workshops and 357 have been supported through one-to-one engagement to help them to implement growth strategies and become more resilient. The type of support offered includes enhancing their digital and online presence, improving tendering skills and specialist support for businesses with high growth potential
- A further 40 businesses were provided with specialist support to help navigate new processes and administration requirements and address the ongoing challenges presented through EU exit
- We launched the Digital Surge programme in February in partnership with the 10 other councils. This aims to support over 1000 businesses across Northern Ireland to improve their digital capacity. 198 businesses across the region will access support through a range of specialist workshops, events, mentoring and aftercare over the period of the programme (18 in the Belfast City Council area)
- City Vibrancy: In January we launched the Vibrant Business Destinations programme in partnership with DfC which aims to support local business associations to develop and deliver interventions that will drive footfall and create vibrancy in areas outside of the city centre. To date there have been 17 enquiries in relation to the programme and officers are engaging with businesses to support them with the expression of interest process, this scheme will be in place to October 2023. We also continue to support the City Regeneration and Development Team to develop and deliver the Vacant to Vibrant programme ensuring businesses have access to support to enable them to apply for the scheme
- Innovation Factory: now at 70% occupancy, the operator has ambitious plans to increase those numbers in 2022/23. The centre has seen a high level of interest from new firms in sectors including TV/film, digital, engineering and green tech. Over the year 84 businesses engaged in masterclasses and events at the centre. As part of their social and economic regeneration activity, 30 work placements have been facilitated by IF customers over recent months, and a series of school engagement activities have been facilitated
- Scaling and growth: in partnership with Catalyst and Invest NI, the Way to Scale programme supported 60 individuals to participate on a series of bootcamps to transform

their businesses and support them to scale and grow to turnover of more than £3million. 10 were supported to participate in a one week residential at MIT and access a peer-to-peer workshop series with Catalyst and a Go to Market residential in Boston which focuses on go to market strategies and tactics

- We also supported the development of key growth sectors through engagement on partnership project with the Innovation team, these included HUB-IN and XPAND which aim to develop local hubs of innovation and identify opportunities for local SMEs to address key city challenges through the distribution of Challenge Funds
- In partnership with the Tourism, Culture and Arts Unit we supported the development of our UNESCO City of Music bid and wider music strategy for the City. With the successful bid announcement and draft music strategy complete, we further supported our City of Music ambitions, through our activity under Output Belfast. In 2021/22 “Output Belfast” activity included a number of key projects including a range of events and a series of panels looking at music and new technologies, and music and business showcases, providing artists and businesses the opportunity to showcase their work to the international business community.
- The Belfast Business Survey was launched in Summer 2021. This research assesses trading conditions, outlook and current challenges facing businesses based in the city. This year we have received nearly 400 responses to each survey wave to date. The findings have been integral to informing and shaping the unit’s programme of work.