



Department for the
Economy
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PLACE 10X

A SUB-REGIONAL ECONOMIC APPROACH



MAY 2023

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locally designed interventions to deliver innovative, inclusive, and sustainable economic growth; building on the existing strengths of a place to unlock potential, to empower communities, and to tackle sub-regional and local inequality.

CALL FOR EVIDENCE
May 2023

Introduction	4
What is Place?	5
What is Place10X?	6
The Call for Evidence – Overview	7
1 – What is the problem we are trying to solve?	8
2 – What geographic areas should Place10X cover?	10
3 – What is expected of delivery partners?	12
4 – What interventions could occur?	13
5 – What are the indicators of success?	14
6 – Is the Department’s definition of Place and use of Place10X correct?	16
Summary	17
How to respond	18
Annex A – Evidence Snapshot	19
Annex B – Example Indicators	24
Further Information	26

PLACE 10X

A SUB-REGIONAL ECONOMIC APPROACH

DfE is responsible for the economy across Northern Ireland and the [10X Vision](#)¹ is the Department's plan to create a pathway to transform the entire economy innovatively, inclusively, and sustainably at a regional level. This is a long-term plan where Northern Ireland will become one of the top performing small, advanced economies in the world.

With 10X driving ambition at the macro level, and councils leading economic development at a local level in partnership with statutory partners such as Invest NI, there is a need to consider the sub-regional focus² and how the three levels link together. This is where [Place10X](#) comes in. This is why DfE is asking for your help to develop this approach.

This Call for Evidence is to create a body of information which will inform policy makers and a future Minister in the Department for the Economy of what central intervention and support is needed or wanted.

We are also looking for your thoughts on the best way to measure success. We would like you to share your thoughts on these so that we can co-produce a collective approach to sub-regional economic initiatives.

Embedding a concept like *place* takes time. This is not going to be quick or easy. It will take a Minister to be in office to set new policy directions. It will require a realignment of policy teams and programme delivery bodies to reprioritise their focus. Results may be visible in some areas instantly and some change may be generational. We do not want to duplicate or challenge your efforts but to build on them.

1 [10X Economy - an economic vision](#)

2 Sub-regional here is taken in the context that NI is the regional level, the 11 council areas are each a local level and hence, sub-regional is an area (to be defined) in between these levels. See page 7 below.

What is Place?

Place at its most general refers to three main components:

- location – where it is on a map, e.g. an area, city, town, or village;
- locale – the material social setting, e.g. workplaces, shops, neighbourhoods, churches; and
- a sense of a place – how we feel emotionally about a location or locale.

Taken together it can be an idea of identity and belonging, both physically and culturally, and allows some to define the special quality of a place.

When used in policy making and programme development it demands that those designing interventions are cognisant of the uniqueness of a place, while working with those based there, to design initiatives to be complementary and specialised.

Place based interventions are not simply a local version of a macro approach, they often aim to tackle an inequality or disadvantage too. In this way *place* based interventions can accelerate the development of a more robust local ecosystem, identifying and unlocking capability while removing systematic weaknesses.

This means working to build on the existing strengths of a place: its people and its businesses, councils and community organisations, local knowledge, and experience, and agreeing how to use these assets to harness this untapped potential to deliver inclusive and sustainable change.

What is Place10X?

DfE's responsibility is the economic remit, and as *place* refers to a much broader concept encompassing the work of other NI Executive departments such as community, justice, education, and health, there is a need to distinguish what the Department can and cannot do.

[Place10X](#) is used here to remove any confusion with the wider concept. This is the start of a conversation that will lead to a strategic approach to determine what intervention and support is required within the economic remit, and to determine what role the Department for the Economy can and should play in places across Northern Ireland.

The [Place10X](#) Team in DfE will develop this work stream throughout 2023 beginning by listening to stakeholders through this Call for Evidence.

The Call for Evidence – Overview

This requires several questions be answered:

1. What is the problem we are trying to solve?
2. What geographic areas should [Place10X](#) cover?
3. What is expected of delivery partners?
4. What interventions could or already occur?
5. What does success look like?
6. Is the Department's view of *place* and use of [Place10X](#) correct?

We will ask these questions and highlight early thinking throughout this document. A response form is attached at the end, but we would also like to meet with stakeholders to listen to your ideas. We are happy to do this via videoconference or in person. We would appreciate sight of relevant plans in your organisation that consider *place*.

This will be done in three cohorts:

- Local Government, third sector, business, academia, community groups, and trade bodies;
- DfE and ALB partners; and
- NICS *place* teams & delivery partners.

Once views have been collected, we will analyse responses to develop a position paper to test those ideas with you. This will be followed by a consultation to co-produce what the final [Place10X](#) strategic approach should be.

1 – What is the problem we are trying to solve?

- a. Firstly, there is a Departmental macro regional approach (10X) and there are local government approaches but no defined DfE sub-regional approach and no strategic link between those three levels. Is there a need for a sub-regional level?

The 10X Vision is clear that *place* based thinking should be applied to the programme of work DfE is involved in. This holistic approach is important to ensure that everyone in society can avail of the economic opportunities 10X will bring.

Taking this as a starting point, an initial analysis of sub-regional disparities was undertaken to create a snapshot (see Annex A) based on the geographic model of the four City and Growth Deal (CGD) regions. The CGD regions were chosen here as sub-regionally representative to provide an illustrative evidence base. The metrics showed disparities existed and a further snapshot of metrics at council area level revealed differences within the CGD regions. Even within areas that are doing relatively well there appear to be variations of economic prosperity.

While this isn't comprehensive, and it doesn't dig deeply into the factors behind the metrics, it does point to the need to at least consider there are disparities. Many of these areas will continue to show disparities unless we change our approach – the status quo has not worked to date. There is also the chance to maximise opportunities in areas that are performing better and to examine if central government support can accelerate growth. It highlights there is a challenge for the Department to consider.

- b. Further, if the Department has a role to play at a sub-regional level, does it then follow there is a role at council area? What could this be given the role and remit of local government? Should DfE be involved only sub-regionally initially leaving the local space to councils, business, academia, and communities?

The metrics point to the need for more joined up thinking across the public sector given the range of issues and the levels of government involved. Adopting a sub-regional approach and linking this to 10X and local council area plans would appear to be a sensible course of action. It could remove silos, maximise limited resources, enable delivery bodies to pivot and realign to more targeted programmes, and it brings a greater range of expertise to bear. Given the scale of this issue, it makes sense for DfE to play a central role at sub-regional level. The Department has a range of drivers and influence that can support and supplement other stakeholders to remove or lessen disparities.

This doesn't mean always taking the lead or being the decision maker but can be a role acting as a co-ordinator between a range of partners. The Department has a range of Arm's Length Bodies (ALB) such as Invest NI and Tourism NI that can play an important function here too. ALBs are already embedded in sub-regional and local level work streams, have inputted to local development plans, and have a wealth of experience at working within the unique characteristics of a place. Their knowledge will be essential in landscape mapping now, and in horizon scanning going forward.

At local level any work must be undertaken in partnership with those already acting in those places. There is even an argument that DfE should never be in the lead, but how this may manifest itself is discussed alongside geographic considerations below.

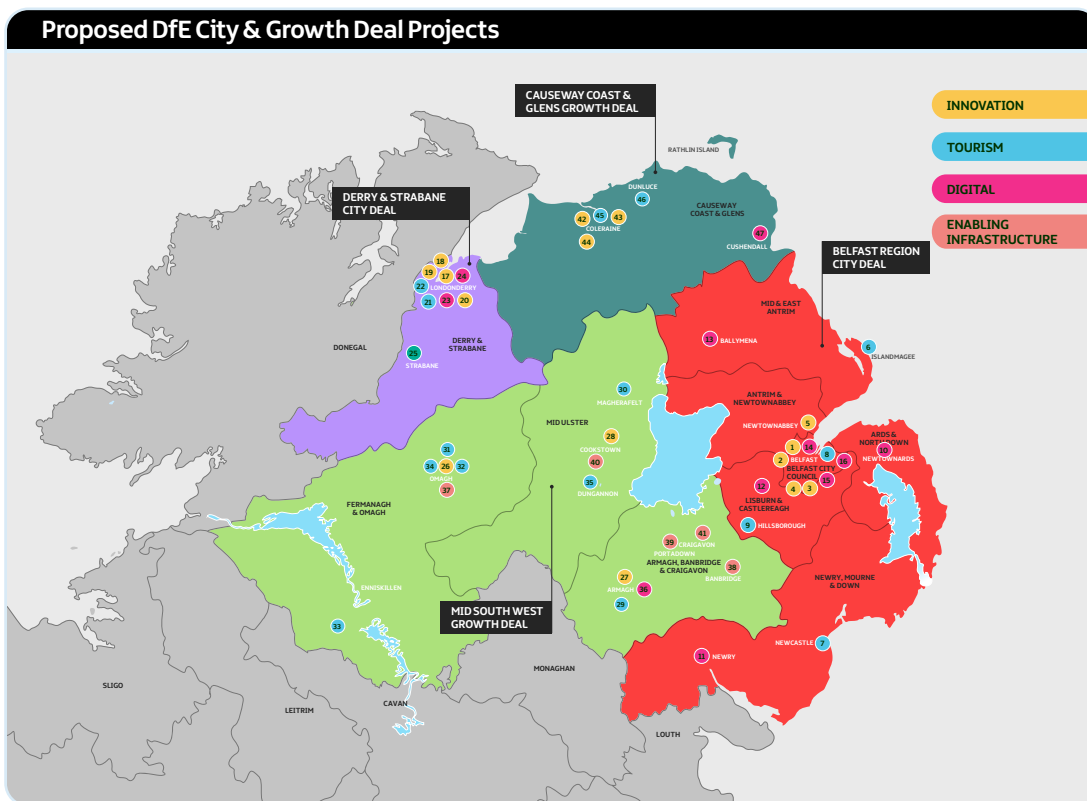
2 – What geographic areas should Place10X cover?

There are three possible strands to a geographic approach:

- sub-regional;
- local; and
- custom focused.

With 10X as the macro regional NI approach, a local level approach could be appropriately classed as a council area. In turn sub-regional would then be anything aggregating council areas together. A custom focus, such as cross-border initiatives like the North-West Strategic Growth Partnership and the Dublin Belfast Economic Corridor can be supported or a more localised approach could be developed based on need.

The City & Growth Deals (CGD) Programme has established good relationships between DfE, local government, universities, and other government departments. Invest NI and Tourism NI act as investment decision makers for new project proposals giving them an insight to sub-regional needs and they will already be applying a *place* based approach when considering CGD business cases. DfE and its delivery partners are already considering how resources can be reprioritised to maximise the Deal projects' potential; taking a consistent approach beyond the programme for this purpose would therefore be reasonable. It would appear to be the most appropriate starting sub-regional model for [Place10X](#).



Source: Department for the Economy NI

While some *place* interventions need to be at CGD project size, given the scale requirements, some must be at a more granular level due to the challenge they are tackling or that they are not able to be delivered through a City & Growth Deal project. These are the local level interventions.

With councils in the lead of local economic development and with statistical data often collected at this level, it makes sense that council areas are considered as the ‘local level’ in terms of [Place10X](#). While some *place* interventions may need to occur at ward level or lower, developing metrics and indicators could prove difficult. Given that the macro level is directed by central government and that the CGD sub-regional level is a partnership of central and local government, it follows that local area *place* interventions should be designed and led by that community – whether local government, or community and third sector, or business groups – not DfE. There is a space for the Department to support and monitor actions that will aggregate towards achieving 10X goals and this should be explored with local government.

Regardless of lead, these levels are interlinked and can be complementary, allowing both top-down and bottom-up design to tackle the same issue.

3 – What is expected of delivery partners?

If DfE can use the evidence base to further identify sub-regional disparities, and policy teams are able to apply a *place* based lens to realign objectives and prioritise localised interventions, programme delivery partners – such as Invest NI – could then direct focused support to tackle those disparities at that level. With regional offices established, InvestNI is well placed to support [Place10X](#). Discussions are already underway to consider how this could operate.

There is also the potential to work with other NICS departments, such as through the Department for Communities and Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs led Test and Learn project. Universities, as CGD partners, could not only support actions and interventions directly, but could also support the development of policy and a metrics dataset using their academic expertise.

Local councils can play a key role in working with the Department to align their priorities with DfE's macro level indicators for success. There are also partnership opportunities if one or more councils have the same issue that the sub-regional work streams are not dealing with.

4 – What interventions could occur?

Interventions can take a range of forms – from policy and legislative changes to enable greater focus on disparities and inequalities or to remove barriers to success, to funded programme interventions that are targeted rather than rolled out at regional level as may occur at present.

Even before establishing any of these, launching a [Place10X](#) policy, building a *place* based dataset, embedding the concept in DfE and its ALBs, and forming a network of stakeholders committed to this approach would be a step change.

A collaboratively produced delivery plan setting out the way forward should capture not only DfE interventions but those at local government level, and associated actions of other NICS *place* projects with some economic benefit.

It is important that all partners have a say in the prioritisation of interventions.

5 – What are the indicators of success?

10X metrics and indicators of success will inform those considered to measure [Place10X](#). However, the [Place10X](#) dataset must be bespoke to meet the unique challenges that apply sub-regionally and locally. It should also be flexible to monitor emerging challenges and priorities.

We recognise that each place is unique with its own strengths and needs and that the realities of people's lives are best captured at a local and community level. We need to map out disparities and strengths at a local level as well as sub-regionally. Your evidence will help us to build up a unique picture.

To be successful we need strong evidence to provide a collective, evidence applied approach to developing robust metrics. The evidence we gather and the deeper analysis we complete will provide us with a strong foundation on which to add value. Robust evidence informed policy making will lead to sustainable and lasting *place* based interventions.

It will also highlight gaps in our knowledge and will be a reference point on which we can commission research.

Suggested metrics to map out an area should be comparative across geographic areas and initially based on data that is readily available.

Council level data is already collected across a wide range of topics, and this would be a focus to begin with. This does not discount other geographic information gathering such as education statistics or information from other sources but is to be seen as a starting point for discussion. If data can be produced at council area it can be aggregated up for sub-regional purposes. Similarly, some macro level data cannot be disaggregated. Your evidence and thoughts will be key in deciding which are the best indicators to use for measuring growth and success.

Below are a range of proposed themes for metrics that could provide a holistic view of [Place 10X](#) supported change at a local level:

- Population and its makeup;
- Breakdown of industry;
- Entrepreneurship and Business Growth;
- Labour Market;
- Skills & Qualifications;

- Quality of Life, Wellbeing and Equality; and
- Innovation.

This list is not definitive and had been created to start discussion; further detail is provided at Annex B.

There will need to be a project undertaken to link local and sub-regional indicators to 10X metrics to ensure value of [Place10X](#) interventions can be analysed alongside macro strategic initiatives.

There is a need to consider if a toolkit is required within DfE to monitor how policy and programme proposals consider [Place10X](#). Existing tools such as the various impact assessments could be utilised to avoid creating a layer of bureaucracy that becomes a barrier to success. This work will be taken forward internally.

6 – Is the Department’s definition of Place and use of Place 10X correct?

We know the concept of *place* is wider than just the DfE remit and there is a need to ensure that [Place10X](#) works alongside other departmental and local government interpretations of what *place* in an economic context is, but an initial working definition is proposed:

Place 10X: *locally designed interventions to deliver innovative, inclusive, and sustainable economic growth. Building on the existing strengths of a place to unlock potential, to empower communities, and to tackle sub-regional and local inequality.*

This is not intended to be prescriptive or for others to have to adopt. This is to separate the DfE *place* role from that of other departments and to create a focus in establishing a sub-regional and local level response in tackling disparities.

Summary

This call for evidence sets out DfE initial thinking around what *place* is in an economic context

Place 10X – locally designed interventions to deliver innovative, inclusive, and sustainable economic growth. Building on the existing strengths of a place to unlock potential, to empower communities, and to tackle sub-regional and local inequality.

and provides you with the opportunity to help us create evidence that can be used to shape a tailored, *place* focused approach to policy creation and interventions:

1. Is there a need for a sub-regional level intervention?
 - a. What sub-regional geographic areas should [Place10X](#) cover?
 - b. If the Department has a role to play at a sub-regional level, is there is a role at council area? What could this be given the role and remit of local government? Should DfE be involved only sub-regionally initially leaving the local space to councils, business, academia, and communities?
2. What is expected of delivery partners?
3. What interventions could or already occur?
4. What does success look like?
5. Is the Department's view of *place* and use of [Place10X](#) correct?

How to respond

You can answer the questions above and you can offer any relevant statements or evidence by sending a written response to the [Place10X](#) Team **by 9th July 2023**.

Please email responses to Place10X@economy-ni.gov.uk or in writing to:

Place10X
Department for the Economy
Adelaide House
39 - 49 Adelaide Street
Belfast
BT2 8FD

In addition to written responses, we would like to speak with organisations and stakeholders to discuss [Place10X](#) and if you would like to take part in those conversations, please let us know.

Annex A – Evidence Snapshot

Extensive work and consultation have already been completed by the Department, through the ‘Measuring Success’ report, on creating a comprehensive suite of Tier 1 and Tier 2 metrics for 10X which will help shape all Departmental activity. Analysis of these highlighted that we have significant and long-standing problems in our economy. While Tier 1 metrics measure growth on an international map, the Tier 2 metrics will help us look at growth and from a PLACE perspective.

The 10X Vision pillars of innovation, inclusivity and sustainability have been identified as capturing the 10X vision for Northern Ireland. Innovation is essential for economic growth and social wellbeing and can monitor changes in productivity, entrepreneurship, and R&D. Inclusivity ensures that growth is distributed fairly across society for people and place and creates opportunities for all. The Department’s aim is to help people from underrepresented groups and places to skill up, ensure they are equitably paid when in employment, have ‘good quality’ work and experience a fairer distribution of wealth.

This evidence snapshot is provided using a mixture of the indicators across the Innovation and Inclusivity pillars and is not intended to duplicate the extensive work already done. Instead, the following are being provided for illustrative purposes only to inform discussion. Similarly, the different geographic boundaries have been kept flexible.

After analysis of evidence collected through this, a bespoke set of Tier 3 metrics will be created, linked to the themes already set out in the ‘Measuring Success’ report.

Labour Market Indicators

(Tier 1 –Inclusive Growth)

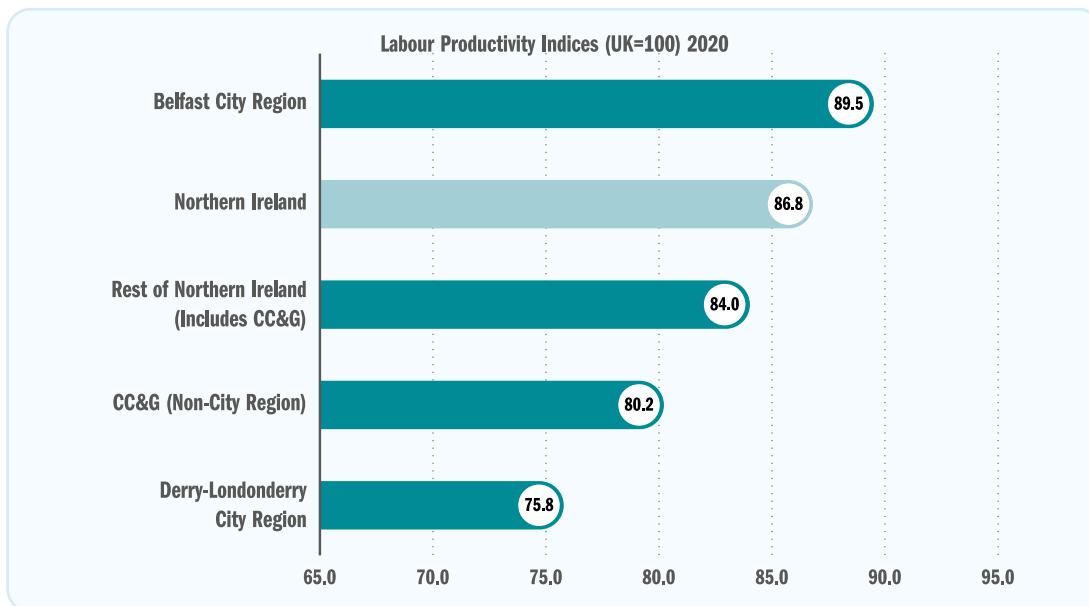


Source: NISRA/DfE, 2022 by City Deal region based on 2020 figures

*Estimates for City Regions comprising of one LGD subject to greater uncertainty year on year due to sampling constraints. Significant volatility in estimated inactivity rates from 2012 -20. Rates presented above are 5y average values (to 2021) to account for this.

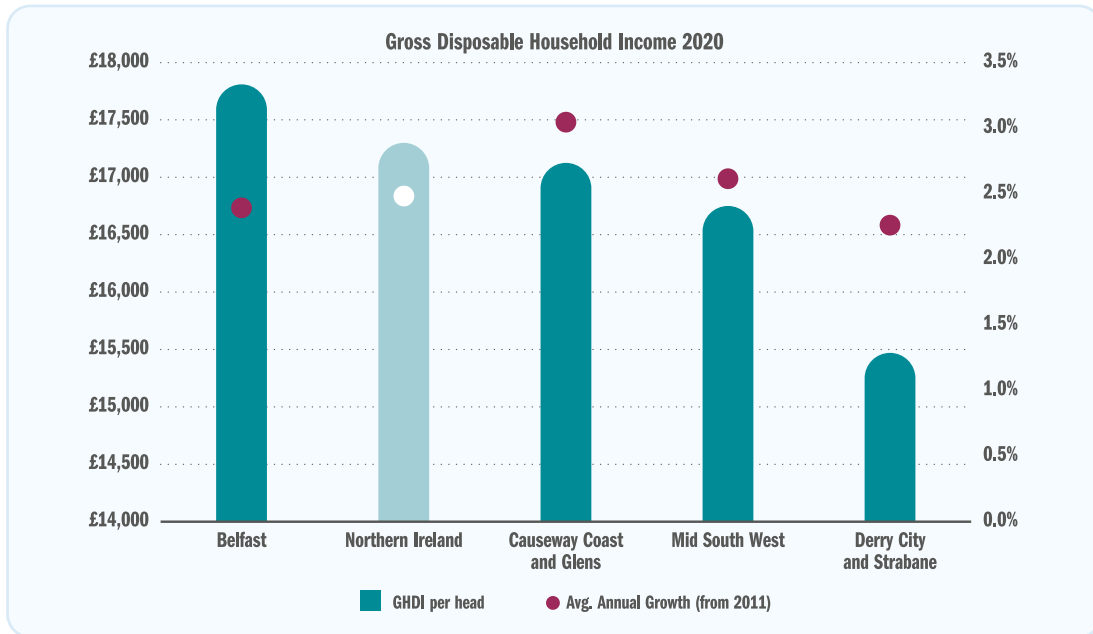
Labour Productivity

(Tier 1 –Innovation Led Growth)



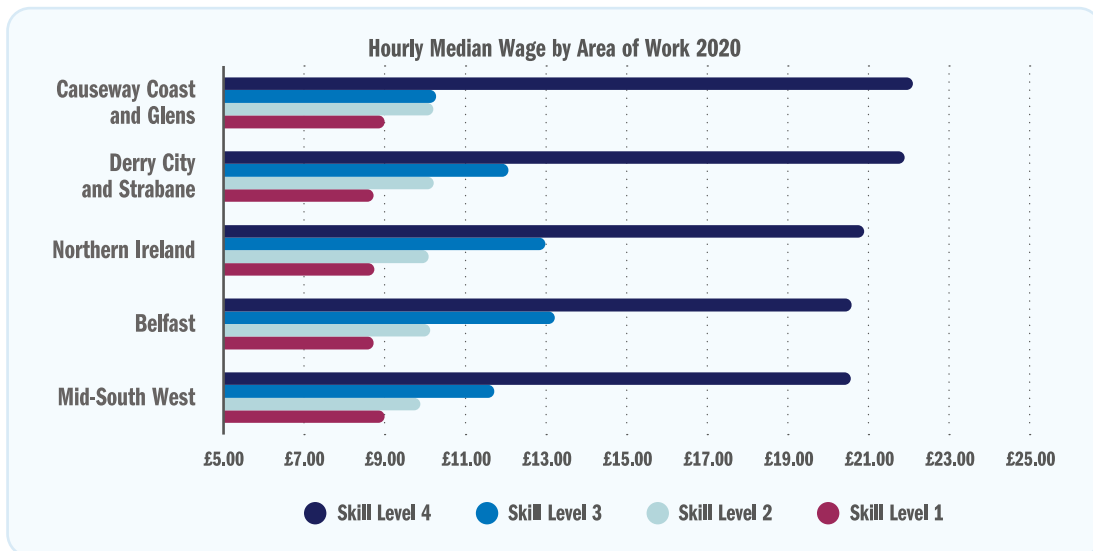
Source: NISRA/DfE, 2022 by City Deal region based on 2020 figures

Gross Household Disposable Income (Tier 1 – Inclusive Growth)



Source: NISRA/DfE, 2022 by City Deal region based on 2020 figures

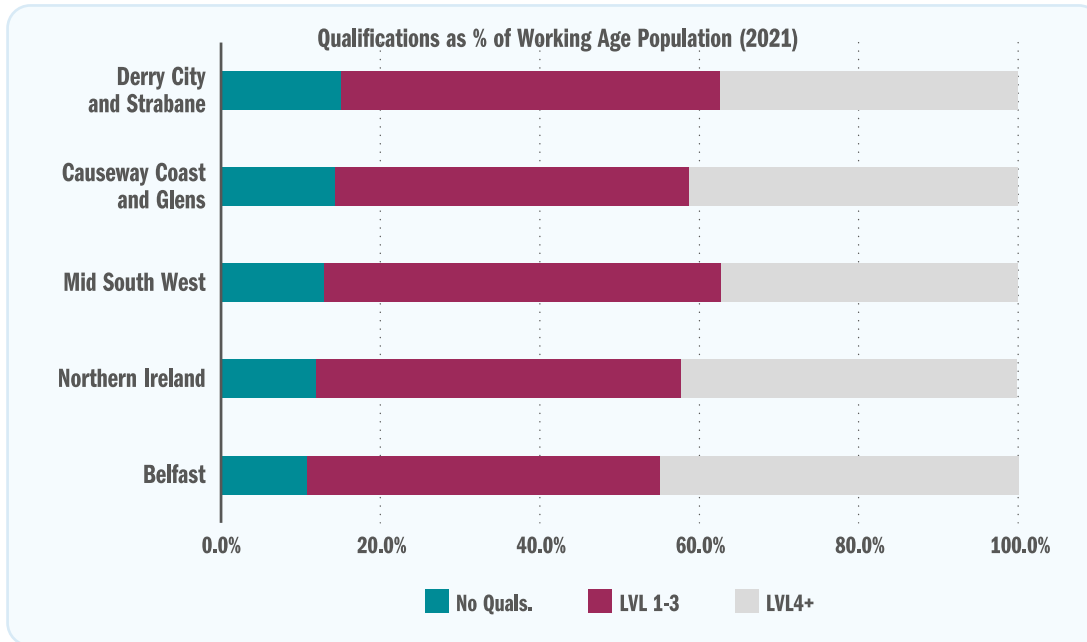
Hourly Median Wage (Tier 1 – Innovation Led Growth)



Source: NISRA/DfE, 2022 by City Deal region based on 2020 figures

Qualifications

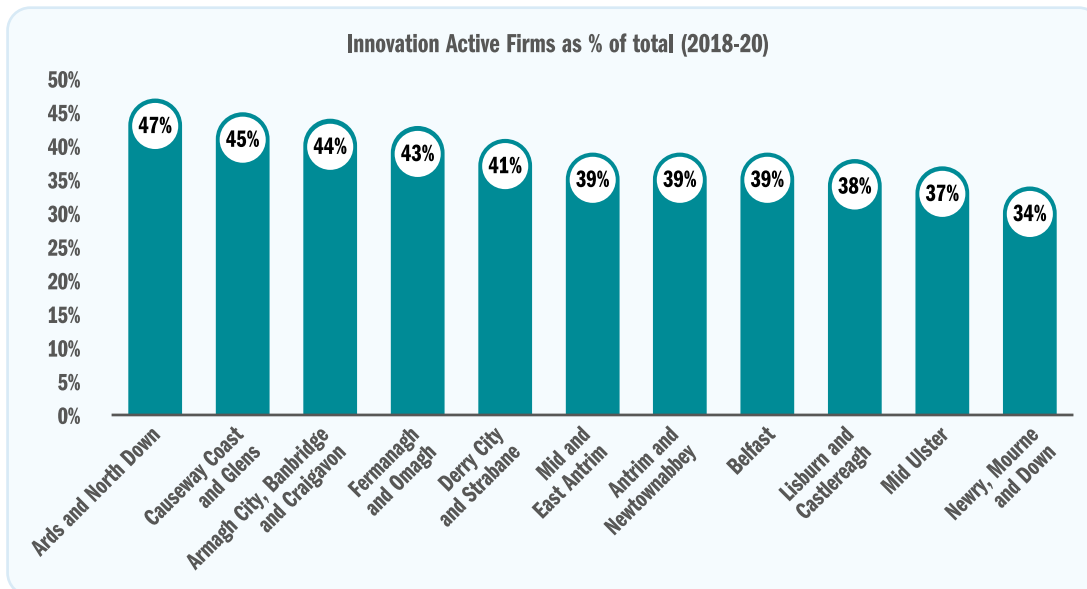
(Tier 1 –Inclusive Growth/Tier 1 –Innovation Led Growth/ Tier 2 –Inclusive Growth)



Source: NISRA/DfE, 2022 by City Deal region based on 2021 figures

Innovation Active Firms

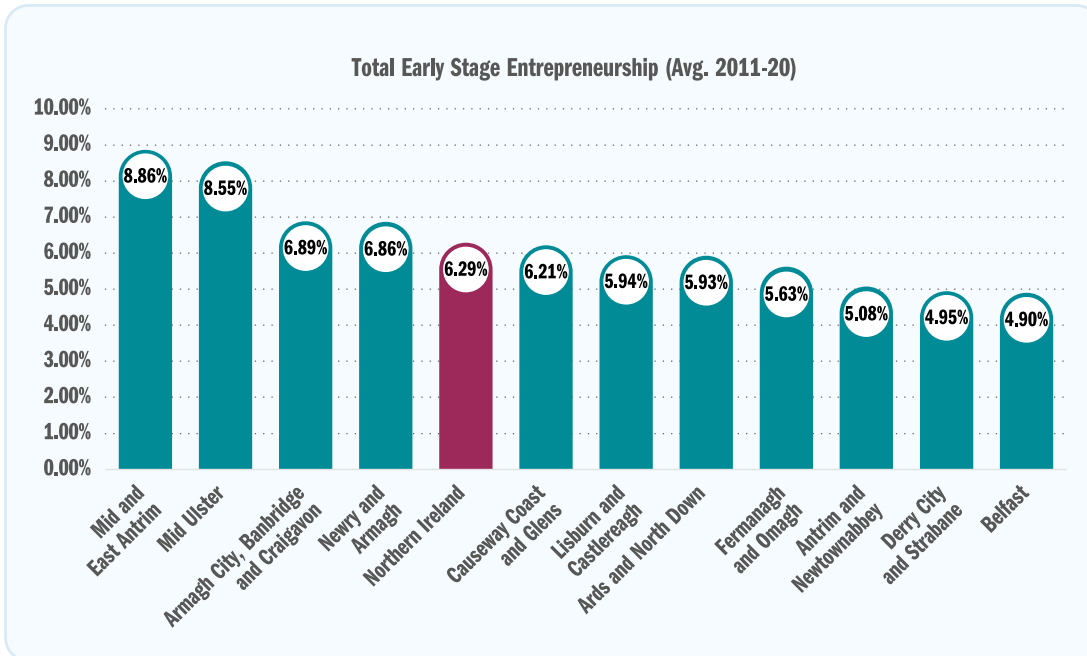
(Tier 2 –Innovation Led Growth)



Source: NISRA/DfE, 2022 by NI Council region based on figures 2018-2020

Total Early-Stage Entrepreneurship

(Tier 1 – Innovation Led Growth)



Source: GEM NI report, 2021 by NI Council region based on figures 2011-2020

Global Entrepreneurship Monitor measures the propensity of individuals to be entrepreneurial and may not match official statistics.

Annex B – Examples of Indicators

The indicators below are set out for example purposes only.

Theme	Metric
Population	Population breakdown by age
	Number of employed and unemployed
	Economically inactive – broken down by gender, disability, and caring responsibilities
Industry	Number of companies by industry and size
	Number of people employed and where
Business Growth	Industry breakdown by council
	Startups
	Tech startups
	Business Survival Rates
Entrepreneurship	Early-stage Entrepreneurial Activity in NI (LGD)
	Early-stage Female Entrepreneurial Activity in NI
	Number of Social Enterprises
Innovation	Number of R&D companies
	Number of R&D FTE
	Number of Innovation Accredited Businesses
	Innovation infrastructure e.g. City Deals projects
Social	Living Wage
	Quality of Life – Life Satisfaction and Wellbeing
	Gross disposable income
	Prosperity
	Culture
Equality & Inclusion	Comparison of wages by gender
	Number of people registered disabled in the workplace
	Number of SEN pupils leaving school and going into FE, training or work

Theme	Metric
Skills	Number of pupils with at least 5 GCSE's
	Number of pupils leaving education and going into FE, training, or work
	Number of pupils leaving school with no qualifications
	Proportion of the population aged 16+ with qualifications at Level 2+
	Proportion of the population aged 16+ with qualifications at Level 3+
	NEET

Further Information

Email Place10X@economy-ni.gov.uk

Web www.economy-ni.gov.uk/Place10X