NISRA Annual Business Plan
2022 / 2023

Chief Executive's Foreword

The past year continued to be challenging as the Coronavirus pandemic presented new variants and intermittent surges of cases. The routines established when the pandemic first took hold, in managing vital event registrations, reporting on the pandemic path and its consequences on the economy and society became more routine. In addition last year saw the post Census day enumeration activities conclude, with a high return rate and exceeding expectations in terms of the returns that came in online. This year also saw the legislation for New Decade New Approach commitments on life events brought forward and implemented.

The changes made to all aspects of NISRA activities during 2020 became normalised, with many staff working remotely, new analysis being delivered, new data streams being analysed and consideration being given to what the future service delivery model might look like.

All of the activities were delivered by great teamwork right across the Agency – quick thinking, responsive delivery, innovation all evident in finding practical and effective solutions to keeping everyone safe, whether working in the office, at home or in the field. The Tech Lab demonstrated how systems and processes could be improved to deliver efficiencies and improve timeliness and a further phase of funding being awarded for the Administrative Data Research Centre extending for 4 years up to 2025/26..

Our Corporate Plan was designed to accommodate changing priorities, emerging issues and the new political dynamic whilst setting a clear direction of travel. The annual NISRA Business Plan contains the specific steps we will take as an organisation year on year to deliver on our operational tasks and the planned transformation activity contained in the NISRA INSIGHT Programme.
The choice of the acronym INSIGHT is not just novel shorthand, for it is derived from the very values NISRA staff identified for themselves. And by the same token, insight, is fundamentally what we provide to our customers and users.

Our Balanced Scorecard (BSC) continues to evolve and includes an Outcomes-based Accountability (OBA) element. The NI Executive and the NICS is committed

to embedding the OBA approach and the Agency will continue to develop this aspect of the BSC going forward.

Once again I look forward with great anticipation to what will no doubt be another challenging year and another opportunity for NISRA staff to show their worth.

At the beginning of this financial year Neil Gibson joined DoF as Permanent Secretary and has expressed his admiration for the work of NISRA, its adaptability and crucial role in providing the insights to help policy makers make decisions – measure progress. In particular he has recognised the conduct of the Census achieving the highest coverage of the population in decades as exemplary and indicative of the high standards NISRA attains. It is a pleasure to have the support of such a well respected analyst and I look forward to working with him on the many and various common interests.

SIOBHAN CAREY
Chief Executive & Registrar General

Our purpose

Support decision makers in the formulation of evidence-based policy and inform public debate, through the production and dissemination of high quality, trusted, meaningful analysis; facilitate research and deliver the decennial population census and cost effective civil registration services.

Our mission

Provide citizens and decision makers with trusted insight on life in Northern Ireland.

Our vision

We aspire to:

- be the go-to organisation for an accurate and insightful account of life in Northern Ireland, informing decision making and recognising our people are our strength;
- provide comprehensive registration and genealogy services that give our customers what they need; and
- be motivated and valued people doing excellent work together; innovating, growing, proud of our Agency and our impact.

Our values

Key to the Agency's future success will be the extent to which we live up to the standards we have set for ourselves, both individually and collectively. These are encapsulated within INSIGHT, the initiative we will use to give substance to our shared values, provide a focus for planned transformational activities and be a vehicle for the communication and exploration of organisational culture and the projection of leadership behaviours.

I	Investment	in people, technology and learning and development.
N	Network	of specialist staff across the public sector, working within a shared culture of collaboration, supportive team-working and effective communication.
S	Standards	of best practice, professionalism, personal integrity and respect, taking pride in all we do and delivering on our promises.
I	Improvement	through innovation and a challenge mind-set, supporting positive change and adding value in all we do to increase our efficiency, effectiveness and impact.
G	Good governance	of data and our corporate processes.
H	High quality	insight and analysis, outputs, publications and comprehensive service, engendering trust in what we say and the information that supports it.
T	Trust	extended as a sign of our shared responsibility, honesty, objectivity and impartiality.

Strategic objectives

1. Publish the 2021 Census results and provide high quality statistical information to support public policy.

   - Headline population and household statistics by May 2022
   - Demography, ethnicity and equality statistics including statistics for local areas by Autumn 2022
   - High level qualification, labour market and communal establishment statistics by Spring 2023.

2. To maintain general registration services during the ongoing pandemic and develop and deliver essential changes flowing from the advent of same sex marriage legislation.

Key priorities

1. Continue to support the new outcome-based accountability PfG under the new Outcomes Delivery Report format and work collaboratively with departments to produce both population indicators and performance level report cards.

2. Continue to provide a social survey research service to NI government and the wider public sector and administer relevant business surveys to inform and monitor the performance of the NI and UK economies and labour markets.

Enablers

To help deliver our strategic outcomes the Agency Board has committed to implementing a Transformational Programme designed to produce the changes our customers, stakeholders and staff have asked for and that are demanded by the environment in which we now work. The Programme encompasses a range of activates grouped under the headings Culture, People, Structure, Collaboration, Data and Legislation.

Our organisation

The Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency (NISRA), which incorporates the General Register Office (GRO), is an executive agency within the Department of Finance (NI) and was established on 1 April 1996. It currently employs some 494[1] permanent staff split between its core operational headquarters and 21 outposted locations including all NICS Departments and has a net operating budget of circa £14.0m.

The administration of the marriage and civil partnership law in Northern Ireland is the responsibility of GRO, along with the registration of births, deaths, adoptions and gender recognition. GRO is also responsible for the maintenance of registration records and the production of certificates in relation to these events on request.

The Agency is the principal source of Official Statistics and social research on Northern Ireland. These statistics and research not only inform public policy but also academic and private sector research, and contribute to debate in the wider community. We provide our services to a wide range of Government Departments and Non-Departmental Public Bodies, as well as Local Councils to assist the policy development process and the delivery of their business objectives.

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[1] Figures include NISRA staff outposted to other government departments and seconded to other organisations.

NISRA conducts the Census of Population every 10 years which every household in Northern Ireland must complete by law. It is used by central and local government, health authorities and other organisations to plan and provide future services. The last Census took place in March 2021.

Our statisticians also make an important contribution to the draft Programme for Government (PfG) providing the data underpinning the vast majority of the 49 Population Indicators and assisting policy colleagues and other stakeholders in developing a greater understanding of the data.

Governance arrangements

The Chief Executive is the designated Agency Accounting Officer and is responsible to the Finance Minister and accountable to the NI Assembly for the Agency's use of resources. The Chief Executive is also responsible for the propriety and regularity of the Agency's expenditure and for ensuring that the requirement of Government accounting standards and practice are met.

The Chief Executive ensures that the Agency observes any general guidance issued by DoF and puts into effect any recommendations by the Public Accounts Committee, other Assembly Select Committees or other relevant authority, which the Executive has accepted.

The Agency is subject to external audit by the Comptroller and Auditor General for Northern Ireland in concert with the Agency's own Audit and Risk Committee (ARC). ARC includes 3 non-executive directors (NEDs) one of whom also acts as Committee Chair. All three NEDs are also members of the DoF ARC, providing considerable continuity of approach and direct oversight of Agency level governance.

A Senior Management Team and a wider Agency Board assist the Chief Executive in the strategic management of the Agency and provide advice on major issues of policy.

Partners and ALBs

Nationally the Agency works in partnership with the UK Office for National Statistics, the Office for Statistics Regulation and the Government Statistical Service as well as collaboratively with the lead statisticians in the other regional administrations and the Republic of Ireland

Locally the Agency works in partnership with every district council in the delivery of registration services through the Local Register Offices.

In addition, NISRA considers the various NI business and industry sectors to be some of its most significant stakeholders, given the Agency's routine engagement with them in gathering economic data. Their views are represented specifically by the Agency's one ALB, the Statistical Advisory Committee (SAC) whose members are Ministerial appointees.

NISRA BUSINESS PLAN 2022/23

Approach

In line with NICS recommended best practice, a NISRA Business Plan 2022/23 has been developed based on an Outcomes Based Accountability (OBA) approach, which sets out our Outcomes for the next 12 months, and the Indicators and Performance Measures that we will take towards achieving those Outcomes

The Plan incorporates NISRA's values, priorities, the INSIGHT Project outputs and the NISRA DoF measures.

NISRA is an Agency in its own right and therefore requires its own Outcomes and Indicators. This terminology is based on the OBA methodology (Outcomes / Indicator / Performance Measures); it does not include arbitrary performance measures (targets). The Plan also includes a section for accomplishments, which can be qualitative.

The proposed approach for NISRA includes an OBA scorecard, the lower quadrant of which, 'Is anyone better off', is a reflection of the impact NISRA's work has had at a corporate level. Further support for NISRA's impact is found in the narrative from NISRA Branches across departments.

Please Note: The Performance Measures are colour coded (OBA Card Ref) to indicate which quadrant of the OBA card they are applicable to. Where a Performance Measure fits into more than one quadrant it is marked with both colours.

Outcomes Based Accountablity Report Card	
How much did we do? (N)	**How well did we do it? (%)**
Is anyone better off?	
N	*%*
Accomplishments	

	OUTCOMES		INDICATOR	OBA Card Ref	PERFORMANCE MEASURE
1	Well **structured** organisation, delivering on agreed priorities.	1	Strong communication within the organisation.	1	NISRA Brief issued 10 times throughout the year.
				2	Microsoft Teams set up across 100% of NISRA.
				3	Six Agency Board meetings scheduled for the financial year.
				4	% staff from the People Survey who feel involved in and understand how they contribution to, the work of the department.
		2	Recruitment Stocktake of current staffing issues vs staff required.	6	Percentage of approved staff vacancies filled within 6 months of notification (including temporary appointments).
				7	The number of working days lost due to sick absence per staff year.
				8	Business Areas assessing if their functions are being delivered by staff in the right discipline.
		4	The Agency will remain within allocated budget.	9	Underspend to be as close to budget as possible.
		5	Provide high quality statistical information to support public policy.	10	Publish 2021 Census results: • Headline population and household statistics by May 2022 • Demography, ethnicity and equality statistics including statistics for local areas by Autumn 2022 • High level qualification, labour market and communal establishment statistics by Spring 2023.
2	**Inspired people empowered** to work **collaboratively.**	1	NISRA staff work collaboratively.	1	Number of collaborative* projects ongoing in the financial year.
		2	Induction process is highly rated.	2	All new staff (number / %) take part in the NISRA induction process.
		3	Training and Development supports delivery of business objectives.	3	Technical Training / Development requested in training survey (number / %) implemented (where demand is adequate).
				4	% of all NISRA staff indicating they have deployed training in their day to day work.
				5	% staff with PPA / PDP completed on time.
		4	Staff achieve work / life balance.	6	Number of Wellbeing events organised.
				7	New Home Working Policy implemented.
		5	Staff are engaged.	8	% Overall staff satisfaction.
				9	% Employee Engagement.
				10	% level of staff wellbeing.
		6	Develop 2022 People Survey Action Plan.	11	Conduct the 2022 Civil Service People Survey, report key findings by March 2023.

	OUTCOMES		INDICATOR	OBA Card Ref	PERFORMANCE MEASURE
3	**Add Value** to Society.	1	The public is aware of and trusts NISRA.	1	% general public that state they trust statistics produced by NISRA.
				2	% of awareness of NISRA amongst the general public.
	Engage and inform the public and customers.	2	NISRA customers are satisfied.	3	Awareness of NISRA among customers (%).
				4	% customers reporting satisfaction with NISRA outputs; and % reporting improved satisfaction.
				5	% customers who state NISRA releases enhance insight on my business area.
				6a	Agree/ disagree ratings (%): − NISRA staff are knowledgeable. − NISRA staff respond to my query promptly. − NISRA staff are helpful. − NISRA staff are courteous and treat customers with respect. − In my dealings with NISRA I am made to feel valued. − I am satisfied with NISRA's level of user engagement.
				6b	− It is easy to find/ locate NISRA report/ data − NISRA reports are easy to understand.
				7	% customers indicating they have used NISRA statistics in the policy/ decision making process.
		3	Customers use and recommend NISRA services.	8	% customers, using NISRA information for: − Educational Purposes − Academic Research − Personnel research − Business decision making − Other
				9	% of Customers who would recommend NISRA products and / or services to colleagues.
		4	User engagement activities by NISRA.	10	NISRA staff will be proactive in engaging with their customers and stakeholders. - number of user engagement activities undertaken; and number of user engagement activities which are new / revamped - number of suggestions received from users; and number: (i) implemented, (ii) considered for future implementation, and (iii) explanation provided where the suggestion could not be implemented.

	OUTCOMES			INDICATOR	OBA Card Ref	PERFORMANCE MEASURE
4	**Enhance Insight** into NISRA Products and Services.	1		NISRA releases are accessible.	1	100% NISRA releases will comply with the new accessibility regulations / legislation rules.
		2		NISRA releases and publications are of high quality.	2	Number of official statistics publications with corrections (including major corrections and minor errors).
					3	Number of official statistics publications.
					4	Number of National Statistics publications.
					5	Number of social science research reports published.
		3		NISRA outputs are quality assured.	6	% of official statistical outputs with process documentation.
					7	% of official statistical outputs with a documented quality assurance process.
					8	Number of breaches of the Code of Practice for Statistics (broken down by IT vs non-IT).
5	We will **lead** as an Innovative Organisation.	1		NISRA activities are legislatively compliant.	1	Confirmed number of reported Breaches of DPA / GDPR.
					2	Subject Access Requests (SAR) processed on time (number / %).
					3	NISRA DoF FOI requests processed on time (number / %).
					4	Confirmed number of Breaches of DEA.
		2		New products or services are developed.	5	Examples of new products and services within NISRA.
		3		Standardisation of **Data** Analysis and analytical toolset.	6	A review of the range of software tools, both licensed and 'free to air', currently utilised across NISRA and their application with a view to determining their appropriateness and efficacy and make recommendations for a standard set.
					7	How many viable projects have been submitted to the Tech Lab?
					8	How many viable projects has the Tech Lab taken started / delivered?
		4		Use of new and emerging software applications is optimised.	9	What developments has the Tech Lab made towards better data management, data visualization, automation and reprogramming?
		5		Data management and visualization, automation and programming processes are utilised.	10	INSIGHT Events progressed.
		6		Use of new and emerging software applications is optimised.	11	Examples of new software and where utilised.

*The definition of collaborative is a project involving a project with participants outside the branch / department; this includes inter-departmental collaboration and all policy analytical support.

Measuring Success

Our approach to performance measurement and improvement arrangements will ensure that we have an appropriately detailed picture of our progress on delivering the desired outcomes described above. The framework we will use throughout the Plan period is set out in Figure 1 below.

Fig 1: Performance measurement, management & improvement framework

Financial Resources

NISRA's opening indicative Resource Budget for the financial year (FY) 2022/23 is:

£'000	FY2022/23	FY2021/22
Net Cash	13,013	19,963
Non-cash	1,044	1,044
Ring-fenced:		
EU Exit costs	0	350
Covid	0	200

The Net Cash allocation is substantially reduced from 2021/22 as collection of data and analysis for Census 2021 completes.

The opening indicative capital budget allocation is:

£'000	FY2022/23	FY2021/22
Capital	1,766	2,346

The budget includes:

- £500k for the modernisation of Economic and Labour Market Statistics and DoF based Data Development for PfG; and
- £916k for updating Social Survey Operations and Infrastructure, delivery of PfG Indicator Data, increasing the size of the Labour Force Survey and modernisation of social survey operations.

The Agency's funding position is monitored throughout the year and any emerging pressure or easement is considered at the monitoring rounds. The net Resource allocation includes estimated income totalling £19m which will be used to offset the Agency's expenditure.