



Uset.
Championing Ability.

BUSINESS PLAN 2023-24

Business Plan 2023-24

This draft Business Plan has been prepared for consideration and approval by the Minister for the Department for Communities. Usel is working towards delivery of the programmes, objectives and targets specified in this Plan and within the limits of the financial and other resources allocated to Usel for the current financial year.

The purpose of the business plan is to clearly demonstrate the level of progress required in-year towards the achievement of the Usel's priority objectives. Progress towards the achievement of these targets and objectives will be monitored closely and reported on throughout the business year.

The Chief Executive will ensure appropriate monthly, quarterly, and annual performance management processes are implemented as necessary.

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1. SECTION 1 – BACKGROUND INFORMATION

- 1.1. Ulster Supported Employment Limited (Usel) is an executive Non-Departmental Public Body (NDPB) and operates under the direction of the Department for Communities (DfC) and on a day-to-day basis Work and Wellbeing Division. The company is a private, not for profit Company, limited by guarantee and does not have a share capital, domiciled in Northern Ireland.
- 1.2. The Company is a registered charity under Section 505 of the Income and Corporation Taxes Act 1988 with effect from 20 March 1996.
- 1.3. The Company was established in 1962 to fulfil an act of Parliament to provide supported paid employment for disabled people and in 1980 the Company expanded through the acquisition of the Workshops for the Blind (The Belfast Association for the Employment of the Industrious Blind) to become the largest employer of disabled people within Northern Ireland. At the time of the merger the Workshops for the Blind had been providing employment only for people with vision impairment as it had always done since it was established in 1871.
- 1.4. By special resolution the Company changed its original incorporation name of Ulster Sheltered Employment Limited to USEL on 25 September 1998.

2. SECTION 2 – STRATEGIC CONTEXT - CORPORATE PLAN 2022- 2027

2.1. Usel Corporate Plan for 2022-2027 defines four key strategic themes.

2.2. The plan also outlines a range of outcomes to be delivered by Usel within the term of the plan.

2.3. The overall delivery of the Corporate Plan is underpinned through a structured methodology, with a clear linkage to outcomes. USEL has developed a road map for the strategy which brings together the purpose, values and behaviours and themes into defined objectives to be achieved over the life of the plan. Usel continues to embed the core methodology of the balanced score card across the organisation with business and team performance managed via a range of key performance indicators.

2.4. USEL'S Purpose, Values and Vision underpin the corporate plan and reinforce USEL'S commitment to support people with disabilities or health conditions to gain employment. They also align with DfC's common purpose of 'making this a great place to live for everyone by supporting people, building communities, shaping places'.

2.5. USEL'S **purpose** as a Non-Departmental Public Body is to assist people with disabilities or health related conditions into employment.

2.6. The strategic **vision** for USEL is a culmination of USEL'S purpose and values, the findings of the baseline commercial review and is closely linked with the themes from the DfC strategy.

2.7. As Usel continues to focus efforts on growing, the business' ability to network and partner effectively is a critical skill. The need to identify strategic partners and partners who have a desire to collaborate is now a key business driver. USEL'S ability to develop sustainable business relationships with partners across the various geographies including within NI, outside NI and across the main sectors in which the Company operates (private, public, voluntary and community sectors), specifically in relation to social enterprise, is now a key element within business activity.

Our Strategic Themes

2.8. Four key strategic themes were identified in the Corporate Plan 2022 - 2027:

- Agility and innovation.
- Championing inclusion.
- Sustainable growth.
- People focused.

Our Contribution to the Supporting People, Work and Health, DfC's Operational Strategy 2020-25

2.9. As an Arm's Length Body (ALB) of DfC, Usel is committed to supporting DfC and wider government strategies and policies. The strategic plan therefore complements the Draft Programme for Government Outcomes Framework 2021. DfC's Building Inclusive

Communities Strategy 2020-2025 and DfC's Disability Actions Plan 2020-2024. The Cross-Cutting Themes identified in DfC's Building Inclusive Communities Strategy 2020-2025 that are relevant to USEL are:



Objectives and Strategies:

Objective	Strategic Theme	Activities	Progress to Date	RAG status
To become economically and environmentally sustainable	Sustainability & Inclusive Growth Agility & Innovation	Consolidate manufacturing Explore new service lines Grow Ability Cafes Consolidate and grow Employment Services	2022-23: Bedding closed, and staff were moved into other manufacturing & recycling departments. New contracts secured across mattress recycling, confidential shredding, and industrial sewing. New service line with the recycling of multi grade paper recycling. Contracts secured for new lines for assembly of bus signs and recycling of furniture starting April 23. 2 new ability Cafes opened with Ballycopeland opening in June 23 and Belfast Castle opening in February 23. Outside catering provision has grown during the year.	
Lead provider of disability employment in NI	Agility & Innovation Wellbeing & Inclusion	Develop and implement people plan	2022-23: People strategy developed and implemented to run alongside strategic plan. HR business plan devised from the people strategy for the year by the POD committee with focus areas being Employee Resourcing, Employee reward & recognition, Employee relations, Employee development and Employee engagement.	
To successfully champion inclusion in the workplace	Sustainability & Inclusive Wellbeing & Inclusion	Develop and implement communication and engagement plan	2022-23: Strong results across all employment programmes with targets exceeded during the year on workable and stride. 14 new learners to our skills for work and life programme	

<p>To be the partner of choice for the Department for Communities</p>			<p>during the year. We have recruited 20 clients on the TFS DS programme. USEL has secured a 2-year contract with SPFUK as lead contractor working alongside Disability Action and Specialestrne, with work to commence April 23. Working alongside DfC on the Job Start programme and we are currently awaiting an SLA with DfC for Job Start starting in FY23.24.</p>	
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3. SECTION 3 – USEL - WHAT WE DO

Corporate Services Division

3.1. The Corporate Services Division (including admin and management staff) will comprise of 24 staff on 1 April 2023 and delivers a range of support functions:

- Finance
- HR
- ICT & Compliance

Manufacturing and Recycling Division

3.2. This division will comprise of 53 staff on 1st April 2023 who deliver in range of manufacturing, recycling operations and fulfilment works. This division operates a supported employment model and is currently supported with a grant in aid from our sponsor department.

3.3. The Manufacturing Branch of the division will comprise of 17 staff on 1st April areas of activity within manufacturing focus on:

- Industrial Sewing
- Fulfilment works.

3.4. The Circular Economy Branch of the Division will comprise of 36 staff on 1st April the Circular Economy division delivers in key areas:

- Mattress recycling
- Confidential paper shredding
- Paper recycling
- Contract bailing services.
- Furniture recycling
- Sub Assembly of bus signs

Employment Services Division

3.5. This division will comprise of 91 staff on 1st April 2023 who deliver across a range of pre-employment, employment support and vocational training programmes and hospitality.

3.6. The Employment Support branch will comprise of 42 staff on 1st April 2023 delivering the following programmes:

- Employment Support Scheme
- Workable NI
- Empower (UKSPF)

- Training for Success & Apprenticeships NI (Specialist Disability Support)
- Training for Success (TfS)

3.7. The total number of individuals with a disability or health condition support per year is more than 1,100.

3.8. The hospitality branch will comprise of 49 staff on 1st April 2023, the majority of staff is part-time casual to work through the busy Spring/Summer season. We operate an “Ability” coffee shop / café in the following venues:

- The Foundry, Shankill Road, Belfast.
- The Stables, Lady Dixon Park.
- Belfast Zoo.
- Café at Ballycopeland Windmill.
- Belfast Castle

4. SECTION 4 – GRANT IN AID SUPPORT

- 4.1. Usel receives grant in aid from the Department for Communities, which contributes, in part, to the wages and salaries of the staff, and ensures USEL'S books remain balanced.
- 4.2. In 2022-23, the Department's grant-in-aid contribution was £978,391 (2021-22: £873,996). In 2023-24 the grant in aid budget allocation is estimated to be £1,004,000.
- 4.3. In order to deliver the 2023-24 business objectives outlined below, Usel have built a detailed operational budget outlining income and expenditure forecasts (see **Annex A**) and a forecast drawdown profile for grant in aid and employment support funding.
- 4.4. From 1 April 2016, the government introduced a new mandatory national living wage (NLW), for workers aged 25 and above. Each year, the NLW has increased on 1 April by, on average, 4.5% and a further increase of 10.3% has taken effect from 1 April 2023, which has added an additional cost burden to Usel of approximately £120k in 2023 - 24.
- 4.5. Almost all of USEL'S manufacturing, recycling and café staff are eligible for the NLW. Therefore, the impact of the introduction of additional NLW has been a significant cost on Usel in 2023-24.
- 4.6. USEL has a business case pending approval to pay all hourly paid staff the real living wage from 1 April 2023 which will result in additional cost of £66k in 2023 – 24. This is as a result of Finance Minister Conor Murphy implementing the new social value procurement policy from 1 June 2022 which mandates that staff working on government contracts are paid at least the Living Wage. As a result, all government contracts issued since June 2022 have included payment of the Living Wage as a condition of contract. USEL has secured the NICS contract for office furniture valued at £324k over 3 years with the option to extend for a further 4 years valued at a further £500k and is in the process of bidding for other Civil Service contracts to expand and grow their business into other areas such as Dry Mixed Recycling, and IT hardware recycling. These contracts have a requirement to pay the Real Living Wage of £10.90 per hour. CPD have advised USEL that we must pay the real living wage on the office furniture contract by 1 April 2023, or we will lose the contract as we will fail to meet a key qualifying contract.
- 4.7. It is proposed the additional cost increase as a result of NLW and RLW will be met by Usel, and no additional GIA is being requested for these in 2023-24.
- 4.8. During 2022-23 USEL entered into a 12-year pension deficit recovery plan to pay off the large pension deficit that exists on their defined benefit pension scheme. USEL will pay £380k per annum towards the pension deficit alongside £120k of administrative expenses.
- 4.9. The combination of increasing payroll costs and energy costs and the pension deficit recovery plan will place Usel under financial pressure in 2023-24 resulting in a short fall in budget position of approximately £16k.
- 4.10. In relation to capital, see attached capital plan covering 2023 - 2028 to support proposed Strategic Plan, see annex A.

5. SECTION 5 – WHAT WE WILL DELIVER 2023 – 24

5.1. This Business Plan links directly to the Corporate Plan for 2022-27.

5.2. The proposed plan highlights several in year deliverables including:

- Continued growth of Usel Ability Café brand.
- Explore new service lines.
- Consolidate and grow Employment Services.
- Complete the scoping of the Cambria Street development Plan.
- Further development of Usel business to business service provision.
- Formal measurement of annual social value impact.
- Develop a people plan.
- Develop a communication and engagement plan.

5.3 A list of the goods which Usel manufacture is set out at **Annex B** and a list of the business lines is included at **Annex C**. Our strategic partners are identified in **Annex D**.

ANNEX A

See Excel Spreadsheets.

ANNEX B

List of Manufactured Goods

- Laptop Bags
- Backpacks
- Sports Bags
- Specialist Carrier bags/soft holdalls for Ambulance, Police, Fire Brigade and Health Service
- Specialist carrier bag/Soft Holdalls for Private companies, Kelman, Camlin, Aksen
- Helmet Covers
- Signage for Translink
- Manufacturing of polling booth screens

List of Items Currently Recycled:

- Mattresses
- Cardboard
- Confidential paper shredding
- ICT Equipment
- Plastics
- Confidential shredding of counterfeit items
- Confidential shredding of blue light services uniforms
- Bailing of paper grades
- Furniture collected from NICS

ANNEX C

List of business lines - manufacturing:

- Manufacturing of bespoke bags/backpacks for various emergency services
- Sub assembly of Translink bus signs

List of business lines – recycling:

- Recycle items listed in Annex B for a range of Councils, private sector organisations and third sector organisations.
- Confidential paper shredding – DfC
- Confidential shredding from NICS
- Collection, recycling, and refurbishment of office furniture

List of business lines – Employment Services:

- Delivery of programmes, as listed at para. 3.6

List of business lines – operational outlets:

- Ability cafés, which is a training coffee shop for adults with disabilities and health conditions.

Order fulfilment

- Delivery and collection of IT assets

ANNEX D

List of Strategic Partners

Usel has developed several strategic partners to complement its various functions, including the following:

- Belfast City Council
- Mid & East Antrim Council
- Derry & Strabane Council
- Lisburn & Castlereagh Council
- Department of Justice
- NIHE
- Northern Ireland Environment Agency
- Belfast Trust
- IFA
- Sport NI
- Trust Ford
- CPD
- DFC Commercial Services Division
- Disability Action
- Specialisterne