



NISRA

Northern Ireland
Statistics and Research Agency

Gníomhaireacht Thuaisceart Éireann
um Staitisticí agus Taighde

Corporate Plan 2019 - 2024



Trusted statistics and
research for a better society



Department of

Finance

An Roinn

Airgeadais

www.finance-ni.gov.uk

NISRA at a glance

Headquarters	Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency (NISRA) Colby House Stranmillis Court BELFAST BT9 5RR
Status	Executive Agency within the Department of Finance (DoF)
Chief Executive & Registrar General	Siobhan Carey
Number of staff at 1 April 2019	520 staff in total of which 45 are (currently) temporary
Mission	Provide citizens and decision makers with trusted insight on life in Northern Ireland.
Telephone number:	03002007836
Social Media	 NISRA Facebook: @nisra.gov.uk  NISRA Twitter: @NISRA
Website	www.nisra.gov.uk
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Without accurate, timely and proportionate data, government will not be able get the best use out of public money or take the next step towards more sophisticated approaches to using data that can reap real rewards.

National Audit Office *Challenges in using data across Government*: June 2019



Foreword



There is a growing abundance of data being generated by our ever more connected digital lives, and we have become used to the idea that information can be instantaneously available and almost in real time. There is also a growing expectation that important decisions will be made on the best evidence available whilst, at the same time, people are concerned about fake news and don't necessarily feel well equipped to tell which information is true and which is false. By the same token we often cling to outdated perceptions about the state of the economy or of society, holding on tightly to once true 'facts' that are no longer true.

This changing context places new expectations on the analytical community and producers of official statistics, which in turn need to be easy to find, easy to understand and easy to absorb.

NISRA seeks to support decision makers and inform public debate by being the trusted source of data on life in Northern Ireland. The Code of Practice for Statistics sets out the common standards we follow, in terms of Trustworthiness, Quality and Value.

The availability of new data sources, increased computing power and improved tools and techniques present opportunities and challenges not just for what we do but how. We want to transform how we organise and manage our work, how we deliver for our customers and users and we want our staff to enjoy their work, feel fulfilled and be excited about the art of the possible.

In developing this Corporate Plan we have engaged with many of our stakeholders to

establish how to make ourselves fit for the future. These discussions have been rich and challenging, allowing us to test our aspirations and understand what we need to do to position ourselves for continuing success.

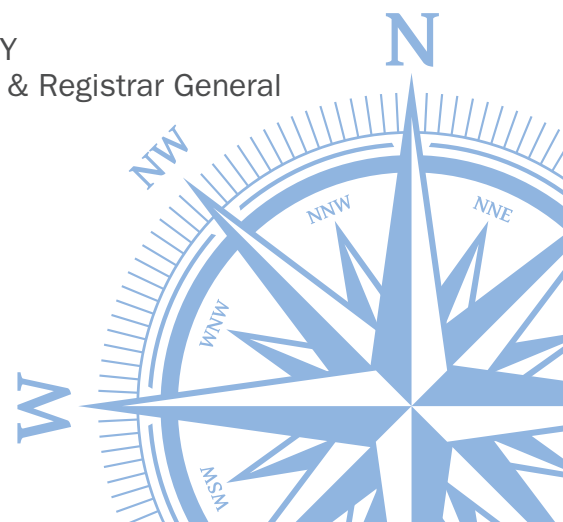
In setting the aspirations for how we will work in future we have identified a number of things we need to improve in order to realise our ambition. These will be taken forward as part of a transformational programme while we continue to deliver on business as usual activity, including ramping up our readiness for the next Census in 2021.

The environment in which we operate is constantly changing and we need to respond to opportunities such as those afforded by the Digital Economy Act 2017, accommodate challenging resource pressures and feel free to innovate and maximise the potential of our talent base.

This Plan describes the organisation we aspire to be and is our compass, setting and guiding our direction of travel, in the same way that our insight guides the decisions of others. The journey we will take in achieving our goals will be given true and full expression in the annual business plans of NISRA and GRO branches and embedded teams across the NICS and the wider public sector.

In developing this vision we used a wide range of methods and approaches to help achieve consensus across the Agency. This was and is a team effort.

SIOBHAN CAREY
Chief Executive & Registrar General



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.

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. The insight we provide guides the decisions of others.

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 and education authorities and other organisations to plan and provide future services. The next Census will take place in March 2021.

Our statisticians also make an important contribution to the current draft outcomes based 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, including at performance level.

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 and meaningful analysis; facilitate research and deliver the decennial population census and every day 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 that 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 & 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 and publications, 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.

Our Code

The **Code of Practice for Statistics** sets out the common standards that should be followed by all UK organisations that produce official statistics. While the Code of Practice for Statistics applies to the production of official and national statistics, it is embedded in and informs all the work we do.

It is based on three pillars: **Trustworthiness**, **Quality** and **Value** and is supported by 14 underlying principles, see Figure 1 below.

Figure 1 The three pillars and underlying principles of the Code of Practice for



Context to the Corporate Plan



We have created this Corporate Plan (referred to as the Plan) to manage the development and delivery of key activities and services from 1 April 2019 to 31 March 2024. This period will encompass delivery of the 2021 Census, further support to the outcomes based and data-driven Programme for Government and the harnessing of powers afforded by the Digital Economy Act 2017.

Developing the Plan has given the Agency the opportunity to evaluate its current approach and priorities and how these need to adapt to the changing data environment, changing stakeholder needs and demands, advances in technology and changes in society.

In doing so we have looked critically at our position, as the de facto lead statistical and research organisation within both the NICS and the wider NI public sector, and have drawn on the experience of similar statistical organisations internationally.

NISRA operates across government departments, local councils, arm's length bodies and other organisations. Each branch needs to consider not only NISRA's priorities but also those of their host organisation. The strategy this document describes takes this into account and is designed to increase cohesion across NISRA whilst leveraging improvement that will be to the benefit of our stakeholders.

Challenges we face

In determining the strategic direction for the organisation we have consulted widely with customers and stakeholders. This involved a series of workshops across the organisation to gather the views of staff, and in parallel a set of conversations were held with key stakeholders across the public sector.

Our colleagues, customers and stakeholders across the NICS and the wider public sector tell us that we are delivering what they need and to a high standard. They value our independence and trusted status and the support we provide to public policy makers. But the context in which we operate is changing.

Legislation

The Digital Economy Act 2017 (DEA) provides new gateways to share and link data for the production of statistics and the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) strengthens the requirements to be transparent about what we do with data and how we protect it.

In the Civil Registration space there is continuing volatility in demand for services and a number of changes from judgements on specific cases.

Evidence

There is increased demand for sound evidence. The draft Programme for Government has data at its centre and our future relationship with the EU opens up new perspectives on what might be important to measure.

Information

The rise of fake news requires insightful truths to be communicated. Citizens have become used to having access to instant information so improving the timeliness and accessibility of the information we produce becomes critical if we are to remain relevant.

Census

A mission-critical task for the Agency will be the successful delivery of the 2021 Census. The results of this work will be used by Government to determine future resource allocations for key public services including health and education.

Data

Access to administrative data will in some instances add to or replace what we currently collect whilst in others it will provide more frequent observations or improve the ability to drill down to lower levels of granularity. In all instances it will be challenging to incorporate these opportunities into existing processes.

Demand

Like all areas of government, we are being asked to do more with less. We will have to continuously review our business model to ensure we remain cost effective, represent value for money and continue to provide high quality services that are timely and meet user expectations.

People

In meeting these challenges we will ensure that our people are fully equipped, professionally and personally, to maintain our position as the lead NI analytical and research body.

Our priorities

We have consulted with the people who consume NISRA products and services. Taking account of their feedback and the organisational challenges we face, we have identified the following priorities that will guide our activities over the life of this Plan.

Meet demand

We will review and refine our approach to resource planning and allocation based on measured levels of demand, ensuring that our business structures are designed to deliver what matters most to our customers.

Engage and inform

We will develop our brand recognition and our methods of dissemination and communication, so the messages we convey are engaging, memorable and easily accessible.

Enhance insight

We will further extend and innovate our approach to data collection and analysis, develop our skillset and enhance our customer and stakeholder relationships to provide clarity and insight on life in Northern Ireland.

Add value

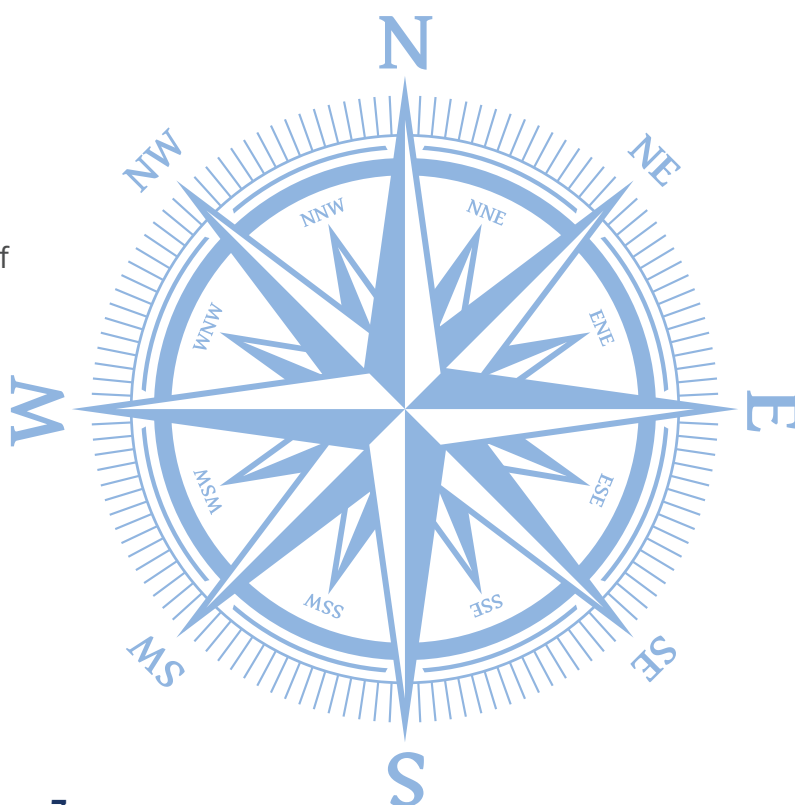
We will progressively deploy business improvement tools and processes, identifying weaknesses in service, filling gaps in provision, rationalising as appropriate, and innovating the process of statistical production and dissemination to optimise the value of our products and services.

Take the lead

We will embody technical excellence, enhance the customer experience, optimise resource deployment and inspire and empower our people. We will develop our workforce balance of specialities, depth of skill and breadth of capability to meet future customer expectations and capitalise on the availability of new data sources to enhance the quality of our products and services.

Stay in the lead

We will innovate the statistical production process to maximise the benefits of applying emerging tools and techniques and develop our people to become an agile resource that is fit for the the future.





We will develop our workforce with an essential balance of specialities, depth of skill and breadth of capability to meet future customer expectations and capitalise on the availability of new data sources to enhance the quality of our products and services.



Delivering success

To help deliver these 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 will encompass a range of activities within a number of functional areas.

Culture

Create an organisational environment that inspires and empowers our people, and promotes NISRA values.

People

Optimise the NISRA recruitment, development, promotion and progression processes to meet the existing and future needs of the Agency.

Structure

Review how NISRA is organised and develop an operational model that best meets current and future demand.

Collaboration

Develop mechanisms to generate and support opportunities for collaboration across the Agency and respond effectively to both fluctuations or changes in demand.

Data

Develop a standard methodology for how we work with data and identify a standard analytical toolset in support.

Legislation

Establish a clear and consistent approach to cross cutting legislative compliance in relation to data management and usage, to ensure NISRA statistics and research activity remains lawful.



Measuring success

The detail of Agency business and change delivery will be set out in an annual Business Plan and success measured against a Balanced Scorecard that combines business objectives and change initiatives and demonstrates our progress.

The framework we will use throughout the plan period is set out in Figure 2.



Value for money

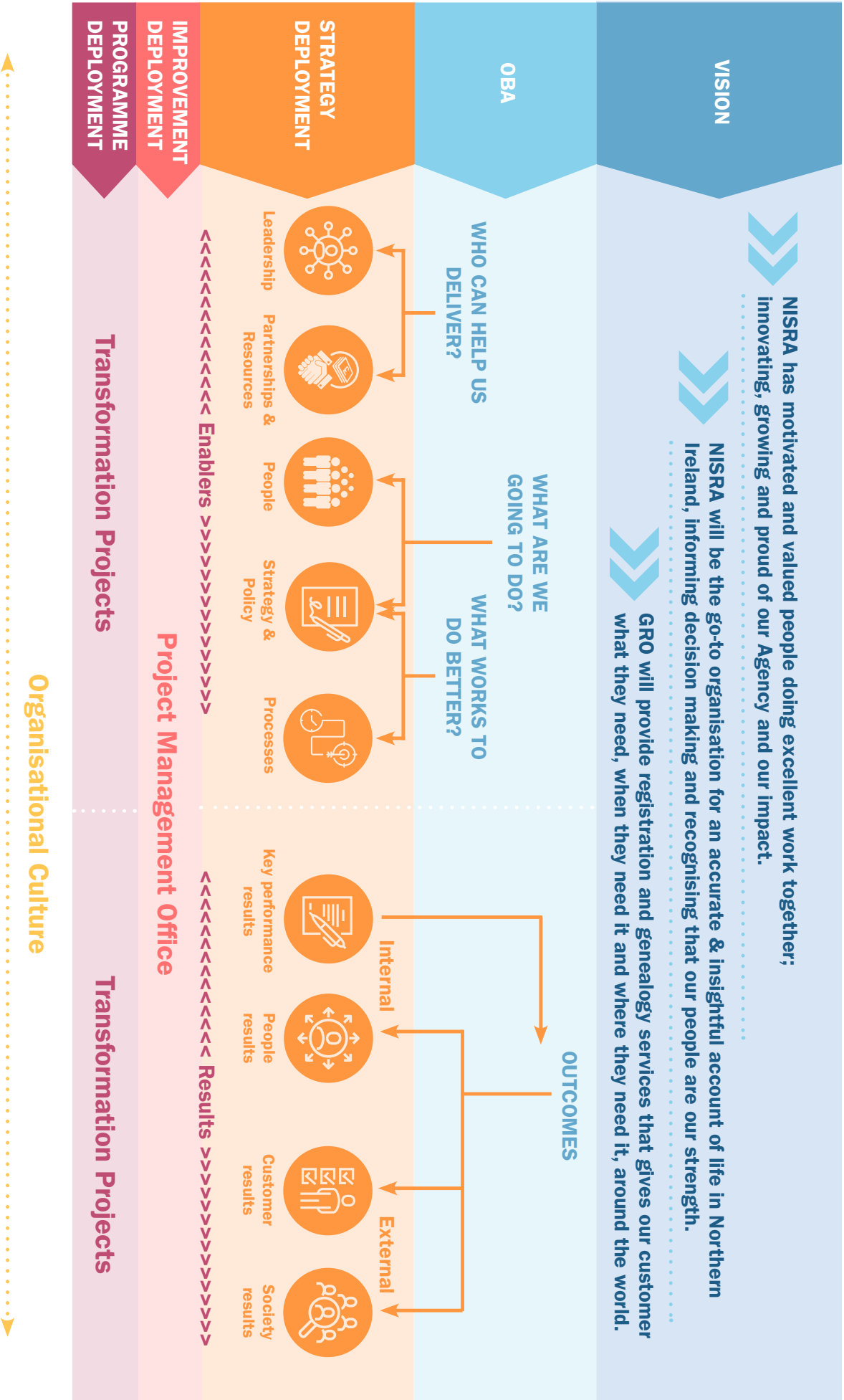
Many of our large scale work programmes like the Census, are long-term projects. There are a variety of different funding arrangements across our many work areas. These budget complexities are set against a backdrop of ever increasing demand for our products and services. We will focus on developing our approach to resource planning to minimise the associated uncertainties and risks and we will seek to increase the efficiency of our processes.



Communicating the Plan

We will engage our people, our customers and our stakeholders in a conversation about what we are planning and why. We will listen to and act on, what they have to say and how they think this Plan can best be achieved.

Fig 2 Performance measurement, management & improvement framework



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and Research Agency (NISRA)**

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