



Belfast City Council

Report to:	Development Committee
Subject:	Evaluation of EDU programmes and development of evaluation framework
Date:	27 September 2011
Reporting Officer:	John McGrillen Director of Development ext 3470
Contact Officer:	Barbary Cook, Policy & Business Development Manager, ext 3620

1	Relevant Background Information
1.1	The Policy & Business Development wishes to commission an evaluation of the Development Department's Economic Development Unit's programmes over the last 3 years as well as the development of an evaluation framework for the unit's activities which would be used over the next three years.
1.2	Since 1994, Belfast City Council has had an Economic Development Unit which has taken a lead role in the council's economic regeneration and business support activities. It also reflects the council's corporate agenda. This focuses on enhancing city leadership and creating better opportunities for success across the city.
1.3	Using funding from EU Structural Funds programmes, the Unit has delivered a range of enterprise awareness, start-up and business growth initiatives, as well as training and employability support. Delivery of these initiatives has generally been done in partnership with other agencies, through funding agreements or by commissioning work from third party delivery agents.
1.4	The council's activities have been developed in the context of a dynamic and complex operating environment based on partnership working across the community, voluntary, private and public sectors.
1.5	The unit has had to respond to the economic downturn and has shaped its work to take account of the changing operating environment and the different demands

	presented by the businesses that constitute its key target market. However while the demand has increased, the budget and staffing complement has remained static – and is likely to do so. In this context, the unit has been considering how it might focus its work programme, concentrating on a smaller number of activities that have a higher impact.
1.6	Added to this development has been the introduction of a new Development Committee from June 2011. This Committee has signalled that it wishes to sharpen and focus the work of the unit and the wider department, concentrating on those activities that can have greatest impact and identifying innovative approaches to addressing the currently economic challenges faced across the city, which addressing the social cohesion challenges faced by particular groups in specific areas of Belfast.
1.7	A review of the 2006-2010 LED Plan “Sustaining Competitive Advantage” ran from 2006-2010 was carried out for internal purposes in 2009. This provided an opportunity to reflect on the wider impact of the unit. It concluded that there were significant achievements from the work undertaken and has suggested some recommendations for future activity. The review did not include a detailed analysis of the impact of the EDU’s programmatic work but recommended that this be carried out. It is suggested therefore that this piece carry out this more detailed analysis (see Part 1 below). In addition, the review noted that an evaluation framework be developed for the unit so that it future work would be subject to detailed analysis and review. This reflects Members’ desire to shift to a focused number of programmes to increase the impact of Councils’ economic development work (see part 2 below). The review included some draft ideas about the framework, but these are in insufficient detail and do not reflect the wider work done corporately on improving impact measurement and performance management.

2	Key Issues
2.1	<p>The evaluation and the development of the evaluation framework would consist of the following:</p> <p>Part 1: Evaluating the impact of a selection of the Economic Development Unit’s programmes over the last three years</p> <p>The objectives of the evaluation are to:</p> <p>Show the nature and extent of the benefits and impact of the Economic Development Unit’s programmes;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Examine how the delivery of the Economic Development Unit has created added value beyond what would have happened in any case (in terms of local economic development in Belfast, support for small and medium enterprises in Belfast, support for emerging sectors etc. - Assess the Economic Development Unit’s effectiveness in terms of service delivery to stakeholders, both as originally envisaged and as they have evolved, identifying obstacles and deficiencies and providing advice – based upon evidence – on ways in which delivery could be improved; and

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Asses how the EDU manages its role and effectiveness in relation to other service providers in this field, and provide recommendations as to how to improve this.
2.2	<p>Part 2: Developing an evaluation framework for the Economic Development Unit to be used over the next three years</p> <p>Deliverables</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Develop a logical framework for Economic Development Unit, reflecting a clear 'theory of change' as agreed by Economic Development Unit; - Include clear outcomes, proxy outcomes and appropriate indicators (quantitative and qualitative) to measure outcomes; - Design a practical data collection system and tools (for example, surveys) for collecting indicator data (quantitative and qualitative) that uses existing data sets and collections systems already in place, as appropriate, and develops a small number of new data sources and data collection methods; - Provide short initial training for staff to understand the logical framework and to use data collections systems effectively. Identify any additional training necessary for full implementation of the evaluation framework; and - Ensure that the logical framework for Economic Development Unit, outcomes, indicators and data collection system is aligned to BCC corporate and departmental outcomes/objectives and performance management system (CORVU).
2.3	The proposed budget for this work is £25,000. This funding would be covered by the Policy & Business Development Unit's current research budget for 2011/12.
2.4	Committee are asked to agree to commission the evaluation of EDU programmes and development of an evaluation framework in the amount of £25,000.

3	Resource Implications
3.1	Funding of £25,000 would be covered by the Policy & Business Development Unit's current research budget for 2011/12.

4	Equality and Good Relations Considerations
4.1	There are no Equality and Good Relations considerations attached to this report.

5	Recommendations
5.1	Committee are asked to agree to commission the evaluation of EDU programmes and development of an evaluation framework in the amount of £25,000.

6	Decision Tracking
There is no decision tracking attached to this report	