

Annual Report 2013-2014



A GLOBAL DIASPORA INITIATIVE

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1. Review of the prospectus and what we set out to do

In the last 18 months the approach by NI to its diaspora has undergone a major change process. Following publication of the report “A Concerted Effort- Northern Irish Connections” by Mark Finlay in 2011, a group of both public and private sector NI organisations created a collaborative network to provide a joined up approach to the NI Diaspora. The goal of this network was to develop links with the diaspora and garner support among people with a connection to Northern Ireland by birth, family, education or business, in order to improve overall economic performance of NI.

The organisation’s objectives are to promote:

- ✿ Means for improved collaboration of NI organisations with economic impact which focus on the Diaspora.
- ✿ Methods to engage the Strategic Diaspora.
- ✿ Strategies to unlock the Cultural Diaspora market.
- ✿ Mechanisms to support and remain connected with the Recent Diaspora.

NI Connections undertook to

- ✿ Encourage and drive collaboration between public and private sector stakeholders to address overseas (including GB) diaspora markets.
- ✿ Facilitate stakeholders’ engagement and support of other stakeholder organisations in their various markets.
- ✿ Support stakeholders in the management of their diaspora contacts to ensure those with other interests could link into the wider stakeholder groups.
- ✿ Create a single web channel, supported by a marketing programme using social media and digital marketing, to provide messaging about NI from the stakeholders and subscribers (including the use of in-market events) provide member advice and support, and keep people in touch with NI.
- ✿ Recruit and support Strategic Diaspora members as advocates for NI.
- ✿ Open doors utilising advocates and the diaspora database, to help stakeholders to develop new export business, attract inward investment, access talent and establish strategic relationships in education, research and tourism.

The deliverables proposed were

- ✿ An Advocates Network.
- ✿ Diaspora Channels.
- ✿ Collaborative events.
- ✿ Subscriber and Member Advice and Support.

2. Creating the organisation

From September 2012 to March 2013, the founding coalition of organisations came together to form NI Connections. In that period it was necessary to identify funders and sponsors for the new organisation and form a constitution that was acceptable to all. Inaugural Council members were:

- ✿ Invest Northern Ireland
- ✿ Northern Ireland Tourist Board
- ✿ Belfast City Council
- ✿ George Best Belfast City Airport
- ✿ British Council
- ✿ Belfast Harbour
- ✿ Tourism Ireland
- ✿ Odyssey Trust
- ✿ Belfast Metropolitan College
- ✿ Belfast Visitor and Convention Bureau (now Visit Belfast)
- ✿ Titanic Quarter and Titanic Belfast

These initial funders agreed to set up NIC hosted within Invest Northern Ireland (INI). NIC is not for profit, and is set up to utilise INI governance procedures. The organisation is headed by a Chief Executive and overseen by the members of its Council. This new concept meant that NIC benefitted from and was subject to INI governance mechanisms but its strategy and overall vision was defined and agreed by its Council members.

2.1 Constitution

From September 2012 to March 2013 the constitution was agreed defined and 11 council members had been brought on board. The constitution outlined the governance of the organisation and covered the organisation structure, its mission and objectives, how membership of the organisation was defined and what it entailed and the roles, the remit of the Council/Supervisory Board and how the organisation would be run. Members were asked to commit to a three year period and the Constitution outlined how changes could be made and how the organisation would be dissolved if considered necessary.

2.2 Defining the vision

To gain commitment, the Chief Executive created and presented a vision of how an integrated strategy would work and the difference it would make to NI. In defining the vision for the organisation it was important to engage with all council members to ensure that their goals and objectives were met. Some of the council members had very defined and successful engagements with the Diaspora. Invest NI utilised a vast network of Diaspora contacts to access companies and pursue investment and trade opportunities. The universities, for example, in their key markets such as US, China India and Middle East worked successfully with Invest NI, the NI Bureau, private sector companies and NI culture and arts. Both INI and they engaged diaspora organisations such as AIF, ITLG and the Global Irish Network. Belfast City Council had had a successful network, Friends of Belfast, and was interested in re-establishing support amongst the diaspora for its growth plans. The NI Science Park was establishing its foundation and wanted to engage diaspora support. Tourism Ireland had successfully engaged Diaspora in support of the Gathering and had built its diaspora relationships very successfully in the previous year. Visit Belfast was also embarking on a plan to broaden its ambassador programme to business leaders and also focus more internationally. What NIC offered was, greater mutual awareness of each other's goals and objectives and the opportunity to cross-sell, and a joined up consistent approach where appropriate and beneficial.

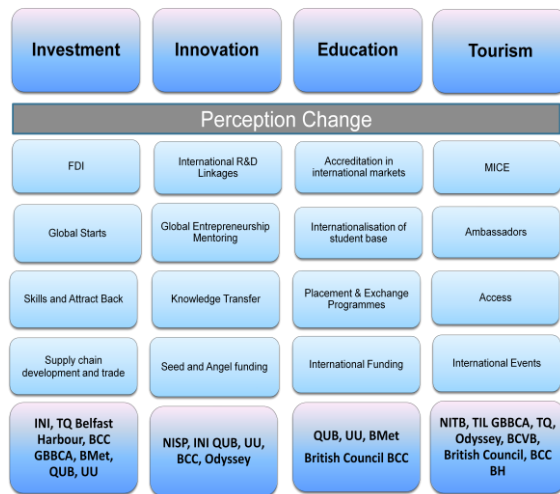
NI Connections also required a marketing and communications campaign strategy that would deliver in-market events with a Northern Irish focus that the council members could take advantage of and a digital marketing campaign (see section 4.3) that would enable Diaspora to keep in touch with NI good news stories and provide an outlet for council member's news and updates beyond their own channels. This would provide an aggregated view of NI and feed into NITB and INI's plans to create joint branding.

2.3 Aggregating and aligning Council members objectives

Having established the vision it was important to look for common streams in the defined asks some of the council members required. This involved meeting senior management in each organisation to understand their expectations for diaspora engagement and the results and outputs they expected. There was a need to aggregate and align the various strategies and concentrate on the actions where NIC could have most impact. This was a continuous process as council members each had varied and different asks. Some required passive support; others active engagement, for others defined asks were not required. The Chief Executive also met with senior management and local politicians to persuade them to work with NIC, outlining the benefits of the approach, the targets set to measure success and the timelines involved

2.4 Creating the Areas of Impact

These engagements led to a distillation of the council members' demands and requirements. In



the first instance NIC was focused on the economy, but the range of interests among its members fell into four themes namely Innovation, Investment, Education and Tourism. Within each of these themes were specific areas of impact that could have diaspora engagement. These were worked through with each council member in order to develop the list of areas of impact within each heading that is discussed below. Having established the four areas of impact, the Chief Executive then worked with Council members to establish the areas they needed or wanted the Diaspora to be involved in. This led to the discrete asks that NIC would use to engage the

Diaspora. But, overall it was recognised that the most powerful area where the diaspora could impact was on changing perceptions of Northern Ireland. This crossed all areas and was key in influencing decision in all aspects of the NI economy. Helping drive a change of perception was recognised as the most powerful impact the Diaspora could have.

2.5 Budget

An essential part of setting up the organisation was securing the budget. Invest NI contributed the initial staffing resource and IT set up. This was a proposed investment for INI of £255,000 over three years for resource expenditure and £65k in set up costs

All other budget for marketing, events and social media activities had to be secured from the other members. Companies and institutions with an international strategy and a focus on the diaspora were offered to become either Sponsors or Members contributing £30k or £6k per annum respectively. By March 2013 £260,000K was secured.

3. Defining the asks and setting targets

Having established the importance of engaging the Diaspora and the belief that they could help the NI economy it was important to define what exactly could be asked of them. It was also important to listen to Diaspora, as many of them were curious as to how they could help and this, in fact, was the most frequent question they had. A common complaint was "I don't know what is needed".

The Chief Executive met with member organisations and Diaspora members and asked them what could they do and in listening to the varied requests and various offers of help, developed the 4 "E's" Model; **enabling** - making things happen, sharing **experience**, lending **expertise** and sharing **enthusiasm**. However it was still essential to distil this even further and make the tasks concrete. This led to the idea of creating a menu of tasks that could be provided to the Diaspora to answer the question "what can I do?"

3.1 *Creating the Make a Difference menu*

Each of the council members was asked to define the asks and translate them into a menu that could be given to the Diaspora to inspire them to get involved. The asks ranged from the complex to the simple, from directing and introducing FDI, to simply engaging with other diaspora members and speaking well about NI. There were numerous examples of where simple enthusiasm led to engagement by consumers and businesses in NI. The range of tasks was purposely broad to enable all to feel they could contribute. Some asks such as becoming a mentor, providing seed funding offering internships required active participation; others such as leads and introductions required sharing knowledge; some were passive; but all could make a difference. It was important that members of the Diaspora felt they could contribute and that the things they could offer made an impact. The MAD menu has become the defining signature of NI Connections. It can be used by all Council members in their diaspora engagement and has enabled them to answer the question from the Diaspora member "what can I do?"



3.2 *Sub Committees*

To add a further depth of focus within the four themes of Education, Innovation, Investment and Tourism, it was agreed to set up sub committees. These committees would discuss areas of shared interest, joint events, joint marketing and most importantly define and agree objectives and targets within each theme.

Each Council member nominated people to each committee where they had an interest and meetings were held to

- Discuss how best to grow the database
- Collate existing networks that may be used by NIC
- Identify strategic Diaspora to target
- Define the “asks and tasks”?
- Establish realistic targets utilising the metrics within the organisations

The meetings were useful discussions to allow for exchange of ideas and establishing areas where NIC might best focus.

3.3 *Setting targets*

Adding value and defining success are crucial to any initiative and discussion among Council members as to how to measure impact was essential. Some council members such as INI required lead generation and saw NIC as a marketing and communications initiative. It saw NIC’s role as contributing to lead generation in the field, and keeping a wide range of diaspora contacts up to date with news about NI. Others required direct results e.g. identifying conference speakers, ambassadors, mentors and new contacts.

In setting up NIC, it was envisaged that it would deliver a series of events that would, in turn, deliver new contacts and opportunities to NIC council members. However this necessitated Council members to attend all events to identify new contacts and this could not always happen. It was important then to establish how NIC could identify new contacts for its membership. NIC cannot direct the diaspora only encourage inspire and enable engagement. But it was important to demonstrate added value and show where and how the diaspora had made an impact.

Draft targets were proposed and discussed at sub committees to help develop the conversation around what could be done and what could be achieved. The original proposed draft targets for three years were.

Area of Impact	3 year Target
Investment	
FDI	100 FDI leads leading to 2 projects and 50 jobs
Global Starts	100 Introductions for Global Starts
Skills and Attract Back	100 introductions to skills network and companies
Supply Chain and trade development	200 in-market introductions for NI companies
Innovation	
Internationalisation of R&D	30 leads
Global entrepreneurship mentoring	15 leads for non exec directors
Knowledge transfer	50 introductions to skills networks and companies
Seed and angel funding	15 introductions to the VC seed and angel networks in NI
Education	
Accreditation	3 introductions into international universities & Colleges
International placement	30 Student placements
Exchange programmes	15 introductions to
Internationalisation of student base	30 referrals from international students
International Funding	3 introductions to major gifts
Tourism	
Perception Change	% change in perception studies
Growth in tourist numbers	% growth in tourist numbers
Business & Luxury tourism	15 leads for international sector Ambassadors and X% growth in the luxury market
International Conferences	15 leads for International Conferences

In the subcommittee meetings it was agreed that some of these targets did not make sense and were, in fact, too difficult to measure. New ways to measure and new targets were agreed in Education and Tourism, for other themes measures are a work in progress, see below. Within Investment, it was agreed that if they had the resources it would be useful for NIC to do research into already existing linkages through existing FDI companies in NI and their boards.

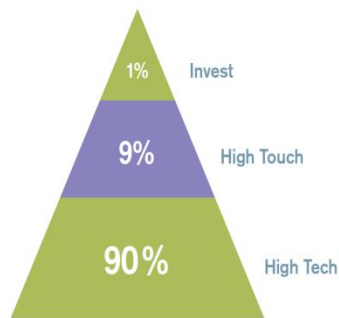
Following discussion, new targets were agreed and as this is a three year initiative the targets were also divided over the three years and currently are:
(Those not yet finalised or agreed are highlighted in yellow.)

Whilst all three year targets have still not been fully worked out and agreed, they have been incorporated into the marketing plan and are being pursued.

Area of Impact	3 year Target	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3
Investment				
<i>FDI</i>	<i>100 FDI leads leading to 1 projects and 20 jobs</i>			
<i>Global Starts</i>	<i>100 Introductions for Global Starts</i>			
<i>Support Skills and Attract Back Initiatives</i>	<i>100 introductions to skills network and companies</i>			
<i>Trade Interventions</i>	<i>200 in-market introductions for NI companies</i>			
Innovation				
Company collaborator (research)	6	1	2	3
Global entrepreneurship mentoring	24 leads for non exec directors	4	8	12
<i>Seed and angel funding</i>	<i>15 introductions to the VC seed and angel networks in NI</i>	<i>2</i>	<i>6</i>	<i>7</i>
Education				
Reach lost alumni	120	20	60	40
Introductions to major new donor prospects	18	2	8	8
New International placement opportunities	30	6	12	12
Support for recruiting new international students	30	6	12	12
Tourism				
M.I.C.E	30 leads for M.I.C.E	5	11	14
Ambassadors	30 leads for Ambassadors	6	10	14
International Conferences	10 leads for International Events and conferences	1	4	5
Access	10 leads for Access	1	4	5

4. Building the brand

At the inaugural Council meeting in March 2013, the Council approved the marketing and communications plan for NI Connections. Essentially Northern Irish Connections is a marketing and communications organisation that exists to create engagement with the Northern Irish Diaspora. There were two key elements to the marketing plan, a digital marketing strategy and a more hands on event and engagement strategy to engage the Strategic Diaspora. Council members and NI organisations engage regularly with their own strategic diaspora. This is working well and member organisations invest their time and resources in these individuals and there is need only for limited NIC involvement. NIC offers a wider and broader service to those diaspora not deemed core to an organisation, and engages with these broader groups. For some in this group they may be able to benefit other organisations, they may not invest but they can become a mentor, host an event, speak at a conference etc. However these two groups require different engagement strategies with the most engaged requiring a high touch approach, (building relationships and enabling their engagement with NI organisations) and the balance being managed through a high tech approach of social media, ezines, regular updates and the website.



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4.1 Tone of Voice

AS NIC is a peer to peer network it was agreed early on that its brand and tone of voice could not be corporate. The logo and brand look and feel had been created during the original research. Using the NI Tourist Board's brand strategy that had been developed for NI 2012, NIC established its own tone of voice through its ezines, CEO updates and events. It is confident, warm and reflects the humour and pride of people here. The CEO updates and ezines have been warmly received and have received positive feedback from many diaspora members. In its first year NIC has issued 10 different communication pieces, including CEO updates, ezines and Holiday cards



4.2 Website

The primary aim is to grow the network of advocates who are willing and able to promote Northern Ireland. Sign up is achieved via the website and events. The original research found NI Diaspora did not have a clear vision of NI and felt that NI often sends out mixed messages. The aim of the NIC marketing campaign is to assemble the key selling messages for NI and to provide clear and consistent messaging to the Diaspora. In this, the NIC website is crucial. Through INI procurement, NIC worked with BT and STIONA to create a new website with an engaging look and feel. The website serves two purposes (i) to allow people to sign up to NIC and (ii) to provide information to the Diaspora on how they can help.

It acts as a point of reference to Northern Irish Diaspora seeking information about NI and wishing to connect to others in the Diaspora and provides information on not only how individuals can help but also data on NI and what it offers. It also provides links to council members and their websites. The website was launched in September 2013 and has received positive feedback and comments from diaspora members.




Phase two is currently being tested and it includes a new database and private social network platform that will allow members of the diaspora to engage with each other and sharing interests and enabling NIC to have a clearer view of members' capabilities and interests. From September 2013 to March 2014 there have been 2155 hits to the website

4.3 Digital marketing campaign

The communications programme is multi-channel marketing initiative with a significant emphasis placed on social media. Over the last 12 months NIC has placed particular emphasis on Facebook, LinkedIn and Twitter. To date NIC has achieved the following

Twitter	594 followers 1626 Tweets
Facebook	450 posts 3136 likes
LinkedIn group	117 posts 570 members

Following a procurement process, NIC appointed AV Browne to manage its social media strategy. This strategy is built on a joined up approach with all council members and involves three initiatives

-  Promoted posts
-  Targeting influencers for retweets and FF
-  Sponsorship

Using Promoted Posts on both Facebook and Twitter, we will seek to extend our reach and gain an increased audience. This will lead into a direct marketing campaign called the "Each One, Get One" to encourage everyone to add to the network.

We will also be targeting of key influencers on Twitter to give us increased profile, NIC will approach a selection of celebrity and non-celebrity accounts with high followers and influence. Tourism Ireland are examining which key areas of sport and entertainment could be usefully incorporated into this campaign and other council members will be encouraged to leverage any relationships they already have with a "Know someone overseas- Tell them about NI Connections" message. We will target these accounts and their followers on both Facebook and Twitter to ensure we are growing the NIC network. NIC will also consider sponsorship in high traffic sites.

All communications focus on the four key themes of Education, Investment, Tourism and Innovation. Content comes from the members however NIC is responsible for creating the voice and brand for the 'choir' of communications.

A great newsletter. Concise and informative.
Siobhan

4.4 Database/ Kinnexions

As the network is the core of NI Connections, it is critical that knowledge of the individuals and their capabilities is easily accessed and can be used by Council members. It also needs to have a mechanism where members can connect with each other. NIC has sourced a private, peer-to-peer networking and engagement tool accessed through a link on the NIC website. The aptly named tool, Kinnexions, is cloud based, and enables

1. Customizable and controllable in house networking
2. Customizable profiles by members must be able to with relevant information that is private to the group e.g. offers of expertise and exclusive access, mentoring, knowledge of specific markets etc.
3. Peer to peer focused engagement and networking

The tool also allows NIC to aggregate and provide data on the interests and potential of each member of the Diaspora. This database will enable all Council members to connect to NIC members and engage with them. It will be launched in May 2014 with the updated website.

4.5 Promotion

This past twelve months has been focused on creating the platform on which we can grow the database and the network. However considerable effort has been put into promoting NI Connections globally and in NI.

The early focus was on building relationships with potential subscribers and key influencers within both the public and private sector. In the last twelve months NIC has undertaken 32 speaking opportunities to outline the role of NIC and held 192 individual meetings to promote the concept.

4.6 PR

NIC's budget was tightly controlled in the initial stages as commitments from subscribers were made. Budget for PR, sponsorship and advertising was very limited. However NIC achieved PR in the local press with articles and coverage in Irish News, Ulster Business, BBC, and the IOD magazine. Nationally, through Tourism Ireland, two articles appeared in the Daily Telegraph focusing on NIC and internationally articles have appeared in Hong Kong, Dubai and in the Irish Times. A digital network, Irish Executives Abroad, interviewed Grainne McVeigh to highlight NIC. NIC also established a diaspora series in Ulster Business, where NIC identified NIC members to be profiled and how they thought they could help NI. We have identified 8 participants and 5 profiles have appeared in the magazine to date.

Sponsorship and advertising were postponed as membership income was developed however in the latter part of the year NIC sponsored 5 events. In some cases funding was found within Council members who then promoted NIC through sponsorship, these included the San Francisco Irish Film festival and Asia Pacific Irish Business Forum. NIC also developed an advertisement that could be used in US markets and designed to be flexible for use by all council members. There have been 5 ad placements to date mostly in event programmes and feedback has been very positive.



4.7 Events

Collaboration on events is a core principle NI Connections. Hosting collaborative showcases internationally is part of the original deliverables. During the last year, NIC undertook 9 events and supported an additional 8 council member events internationally.

Events were defined into 4 categories

- 🌐 Level 1 - Events run solely by NIC
- 🌐 Level 2 - Events run by NIC along with Council Member organisation
- 🌐 Level 3 - Events run by Council Member organisation only
- 🌐 Level 4 - Events run by organisations external to NIC and Council Members

This enabled Council members to host events that could be collaborative or designate events where other council members could invite guest and there is promotion of NI generally.

The events strategy has proved very successful with NI Connections hosting two launch events, one in New York and the other in London. Both events were supported by Tourism Ireland and in New York organised with the support of the Lyric Theatre, NI Bureau and INI. Events were also hosted in Hong Kong, Dubai, Tokyo, Shanghai, Johannesburg, and Toronto. Some these were

level 2 events co-hosted with Invest NI and QUB. In Toronto, the Toronto Irish Film Festival organisation offered to host an NIC an event during the Toronto International Film Festival. This proved very successful with attendance by Minister Foster and a NI Screen mission to the festival. Minister Foster also supported events in London, New York Johannesburg and Toronto with the First and deputy First Ministers supporting events in Hong Kong and Tokyo. Attendance at the events ranged from 80 in Toronto to over 120 in New York and Johannesburg.

In the latter part of the year the emphasis shifted from hosting events to supporting council member events in market. NIC supported 8 Council member events internationally; in London for Belfast Music Week; Shanghai for QUB; DC for Visit Belfast; Silicon Valley West Coast Diaspora quiz for Invest NI; in San Francisco for Belfast City Council and the NI Bureau; and in Singapore and Cape Town for Derry City Council. These events all advertised NI Connections and linked people to the website and encouraged them to signup. In supporting events NIC has developed a process that enables collaboration among members and ensures events at all levels are open to all diaspora as appropriate. To capture the data of those attending for the database NIC will use a survey app, Quick Tap Survey, to collect data and ensure access for council members.

Events are critical for maintaining momentum around the world and enabling the Diaspora to get together and generate activities that support NI. NIC has collated a calendar of events by Council members that are taking place internationally to identify where collaboration can work and where member events are an opportunity to present a joined up approach by NI plc

I've just got back to my hotel after a fabulous NIC reception in Shanghai tonight, it really was fantastic - wonderful location and great company! Thanks so much for the invitation, it was a great night
Amanda

5. Adding value for council members

Defining value for Council members is a work in progress. Council members do see initial value in the joined up approach and the synergies that can be achieved in working more closely together. They also appreciate the opportunities for cross selling and linking into other networks. There is also great support for consistent marketing messages and getting an overall NI brand into the international market. Many council members work very successfully with NI Bureau in the US and in Brussels and with Invest NI in its markets across the world.

One of the main outputs of NIC collaboration is having a one stop shop in NI for international organisations and NIC has worked with the US State Department to host an inward mission by State Department Special Representative Drew O'Brien, worked with Belfast City Council to host an AIF inward mission dinner and with Invest NI to host inward missions by universities and government officials.

In October NI Connections hosted members of the Global Irish Network. This event was a result of the relation established with Department of Foreign Affairs in Dublin and the support of George Moore. The Global Irish Network is a network of 300 of the most influential Irish and Irish-connected people abroad who provide Ireland with valuable international expertise. Its members come from diverse fields, are based in almost 40 countries. The Network works closely with the Irish Government and state agencies in promoting Ireland's economic, cultural and tourism messages in key markets. NIC hosted 5 members of the network to meet NI startup companies and help them with their international focus and reach. Minister Foster spoke at the event and welcomed their support. This was the first time the Global Irish Network had travelled to Northern Ireland.

The NI Bureau in the US has also used NI Connections to represent NI with inward visitors and most successfully with the Worldwide Ireland Funds to assemble a project team to support bringing their international conference to NI in June 2014. The Bureau also refers its contacts to NIC if they want to help or get involved.

5.1 Support across Sectors

NI Connections has provided support across its four major themes of Tourism, Innovation, Education and Investment. In each pillar we identified key areas of impact and NIC has been active in each of them. However, some are easier to deliver on than others. After 12 months actively promoting the concept we recognise that we cannot command the diaspora to deliver and must challenge and inspire them to do so.

5.2 Investment

Whilst the targets set in this strand have not been finalised or agreed, a key metric for Invest NI within this category is people who can generate leads for foreign direct investment. NI Connections organised or contributed to events in this period where 6 FDI leads were identified. These are currently being worked by INI.

Coming home to work in NI or build a business here is critical to the development of the NI economy and NIC has been involved in several "attract back" initiatives, working closely with Align IT a new collaborative network within the tech community in NI, Tech Exiles an NISP event,

Thank you so much for advising of all the great things happening for NIC, and great photos. I have spoken with several business owners in San Diego about possibly locating a plant in Northern Ireland, to serve Europe. It is "in the pipeline." I will let you know of any developments

Brian.

Invest NI FS survey, research undertaken to assess interest in returnees and Strategic Investment Board recruitment drives. NIC has also advertised SIB and INI jobs in its own and other diaspora networks reaching a diaspora audience of 32,000. The Attract initiatives have been very successful and the joined up approach by NIC is welcomed. Several private sector companies have

approached NIC to see how they can work to alert Diaspora members to opportunities in NI. In trade development, NIC has also made introductions for companies in particular sectors in Hong Kong and Singapore and helped Chinese and Russian investors identify opportunities in NI.

5.3 Innovation

Not all metrics have been agreed within Innovation but mentorship and global entrepreneurship have had some resonance with Diaspora members. Many diaspora are willing to share their international experience and their expertise with entrepreneurs in NI. NIC has made introductions to both the Science Park and the Universities of 6 potential mentors. NIC has also promoted QUB's POC and VITAL programmes to its membership and to its sister diaspora networks reaching over 32,000 international members. Key contacts have also been identified for NISP including contacts in Google.

5.4 Education

The focus within Education is identifying "lost" alumni, identifying internships and major donors and recruiting international students. The events held all over the world have been well supported by QUB and Ulster alumni and to date 14 "lost" alumni have been identified. These events have also provided leads for English language courses from Malaysia and South Africa. Internship opportunities have also been identified in Hong Kong and London. The opportunities to identify major donors are more limited, but some have emerged. Following a joint event with QUB in Toronto, the head of their Canadian alumni was invited to join the Ireland Funds foundation which will offer future funding opportunities.

5.5 Tourism

The key metrics in the category are agreed and focus on providing leads for attracting major events, creating business ambassadors, attracting speakers and international events and providing knowledge on access in key markets. Many of these have long lead times and are focused on events 5 and 7 years out, but NIC has supported Council members in these categories and provided leads to Odyssey, DETI and Visit Belfast for conferences and events. It has identified and secured speakers at the International Women's Conference for Women In

business and identified business ambassadors for Visit Belfast. The ambassador programme has gained traction and a number have come forward to be assessed by Visit Belfast against their qualification criteria.

Overall NIC has supported Council members within each sector and worked on promoting changes to the perception and its continuing marketing campaigns and posting of Council members stories is enhancing the reputation of Northern Ireland to support attracting investment, innovation, students and tourists here.

6. Outcomes and results

The period to date has focused on setting up the NI Connections organisation, establishing the platform and systems. Whilst some targets have been agreed others are still to be finalised and agreed within the sub committees, however this has not hindered progress. The three year targets have been assigned over the tree year period and outlined below. The proposed targets and outturns against targets are as follows A RAG system has been included to show progress.

Those targets still to be agreed are highlighted in yellow

Area of Impact	Year 1	
	Target	Actual
Investment		
FDI	10	6
Global Starts	2	0
Skills and Attract Back Initiatives	2	4
Trade Interventions	5	4
Innovation		
Company Collaborator (research)	0	0
Global entrepreneurship mentoring	2	6
Seed and angel funding	2	0
Education		
Reach lost alumni	10	14
Introductions to major new donor prospects	1	1
New International placement opportunities	3	2
Support for recruiting new international students	3	3
Tourism		
M.I.C.E	5	3
Ambassadors	6	2
international Conferences and speakers	1	2
Access	1	0

6.1 The Database

A key metric for NIC is the growth of its database. In the last 15 months the database has grown from just over 200 people to almost 1700. This is mostly as a result of referrals and events. No marketing has been undertaken in NI or in international markets. A social media campaign is planned for spring 2014 and Council members will also be involved in marketing campaigns to drive a growth in numbers

NI Connections has grown its social media presence in Facebook, Twitter and LinkedIN and built a following within its own networks and also within sister diaspora networks such as Irish Executives Abroad, NI Expats In US and ITLG

Marketing	Targets	Actual
Events	2	2
Co-hosted events	5	7
Supporting Council member events	5	8*
Support Inward Visits	3	5
Sponsorship	2	5
PR (Print and digital)	8	11
Presentations and Speaking Opportunities	20	32

Digital Marketing	Targets	Actual
Database	1500	1670
Strategic Diaspora	10	
Website hits	2500	2155
Twitter	500	594
Comms	10	10
Facebook	3000	3136
LinkedIN group	500	570

A snapshot of the database by region and sector is available in Appendix 1.

7. What we've learned

NI Connections is a three year pilot programme. This first year involved establishing the organisation, securing funding and defining the joined up approach to the diaspora. It was important to define a vision, demonstrate where NIC could add value to Council members work overseas and set realistic targets. But most of all create an organisation that would facilitate diaspora members to contribute their experience and energy to the NI economy.

The NIC events were also very popular and well received. They were less formal, and the wide range of people from academia, sports, culture, arts and business ensured a lively atmosphere. In markets such as Johannesburg and Tokyo they were warmly received as they were unusual. In New York and London they face stiffer competition as there are numerous events held monthly that focus on Irish and northern Irish networks.

The NI Bureau, Tourism Ireland and Invest NI are well established in the US market and respond to other NI organisations (including Council members) requests for support. They provide opportunities to network, host events, attract audiences to events and fund and sponsor events. Individual council members are successfully utilising their networks for their own objectives and in many instances building synergies with other NI organisations in the field. NI Connections can offer a sweeper and communication role to ensure all contacts are followed up and everyone can contribute. What has worked well is involving all levels in events not just the business

contacts that are normally targeted. NIC can unlock new contacts and help develop networks for council members.

This does work more effectively in new markets where INI the Bureau or the Universities are not active and can help with introductions to new contacts. NIC can also offer a “keep warm” service” where providing good news to contacts and helping them network with other NI diaspora in their markets.

NIC can offer

- 🌱 A joined up brand and council members who can present the face of NI plc
- 🌱 Opportunities for members to collaborate on events in market
- 🌱 Using Diaspora to build networks in new markets

Northern Ireland and its resourceful folk have an abundance of fresh thoughts and ideas that can't be hindered, limited or stopped, just as you and your team are doing.

Brian.

As in many pilot programmes new information and experience changes perspective. NI Connections aims to be a collaborative network and present a one stop shop to the diaspora. A fully joined up approach is still to be realised, as Council members develop their own relationships and targets and objectives as to what can be realised need to be finalised.

7.1 Looking forward

With the structure established and the systems in place, the development phase is over and NI Connections is now entering the delivery phase. The next two years will be crucial to see if NIC can deliver the leads and outputs required by the Council members for success to be determined.

The marketing and social media campaigns will grow, as will the database; the main task now is to facilitate the delivery of leads and access that is required by Council members for them to see value

Focus for the next two years will be on

1. Growing the database
2. Marketing and communications
3. Mobilising the Diaspora and delivering results.

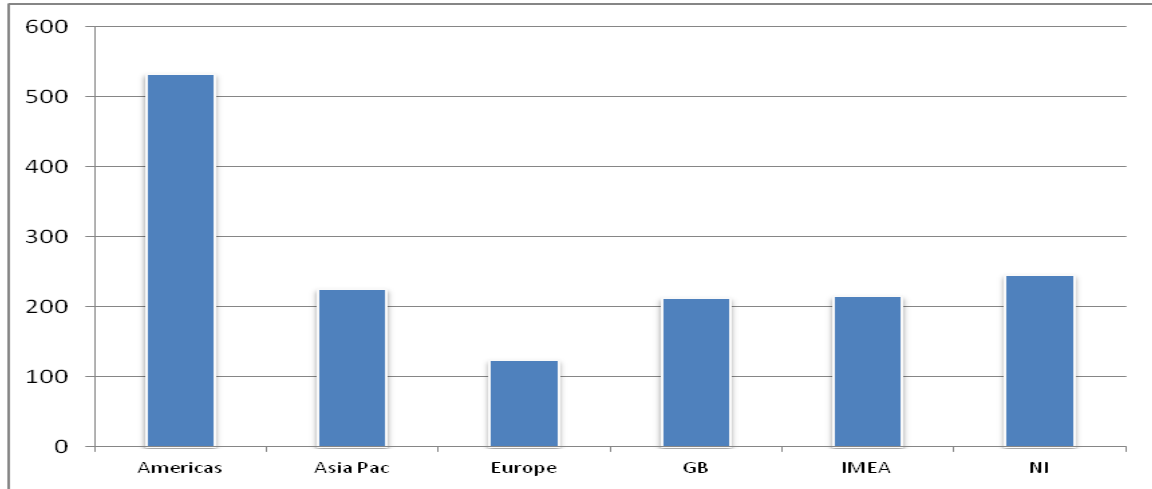
After my past negative musings about NI in the media I feel like I've come over from the dark side and am really enjoying finding out more about how I can champion NI as a place for investment.

Shane

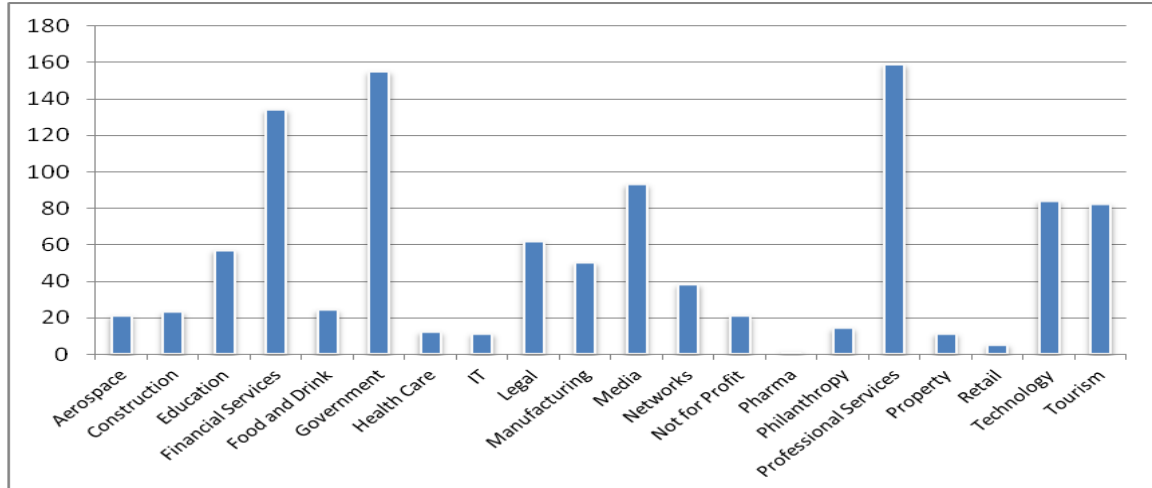
Appendix 1 NI Connections Membership Analysis

Database

NIC Membership by Region



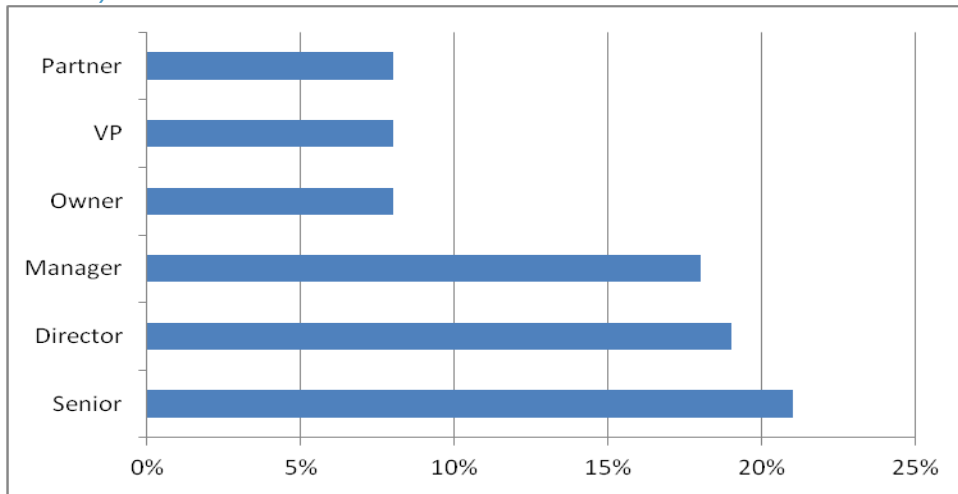
NIC Membership by Sector



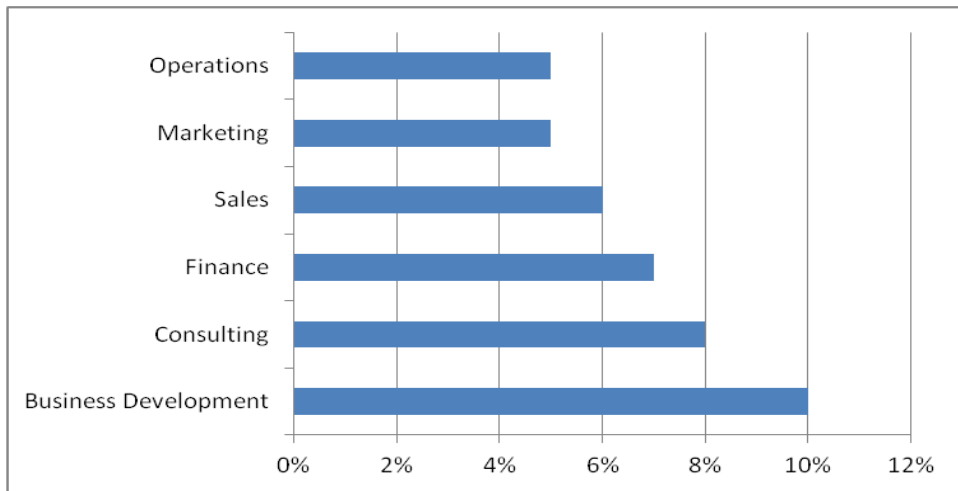
Top 10 Countries

Rank	Country
1	United Kingdom
2	United States of America
3	Canada
4	United Arab Emirates
5	Ireland
6	Hong Kong SAR
7	South Africa
8	Japan
9	China
10	India

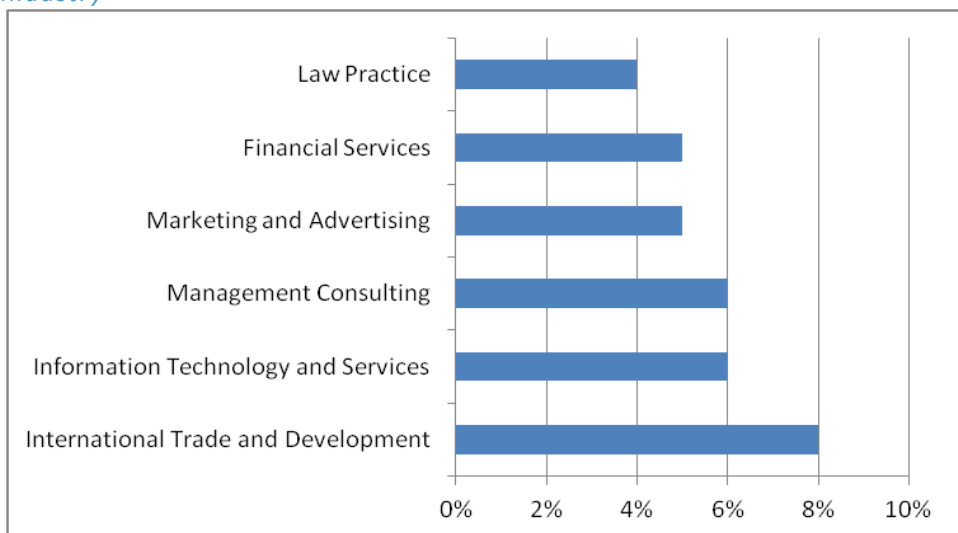
LinkedIn Group
Total - 577 members
Seniority



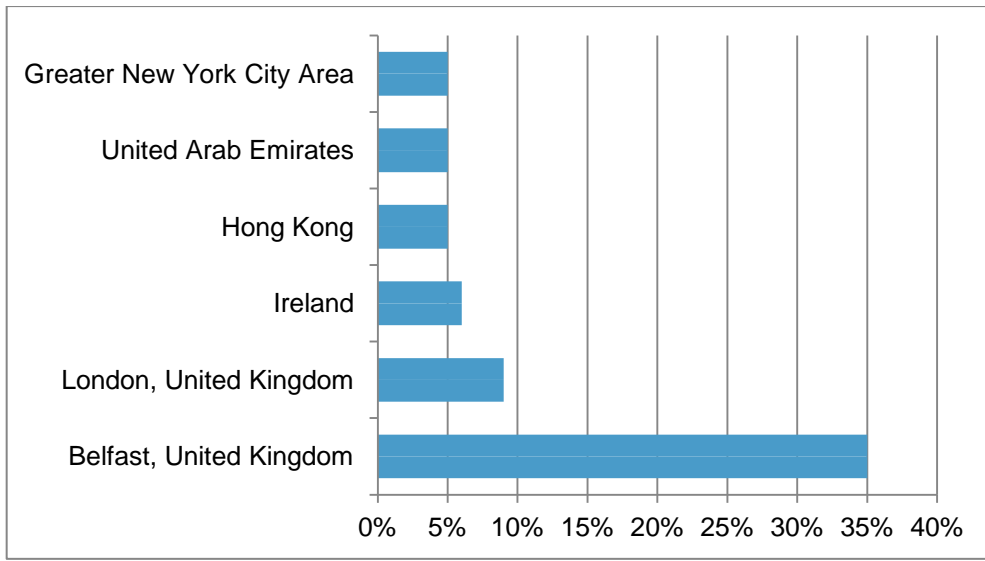
Function




Industry



Location



Appendix 2 NI Connections Income and Expenditure Statement

	Year 0	Year 1	Year 2
	2012 /30012	2013 / 2014	2014 / 2015
	Outturn	Outturn	Forecast
INCOME			
Starting position	£0	£61,825	£29,774
Sponsorship	£90,000	£54,000	£128,000
In Kind	£103,000	£134,457	£114,169
Total Income	£193,000	£250,281	£271,943
EXPENDITURE			
Set Up Cost			
IT	-£40,096	-£20,000	
Running Costs			
Salaries	-£62,904	-£113,252	-£113,252
Travel and Subsistence	-£9,522	-£22,333	-£20,000
Events	£0	-£30,000	-£30,000
Marketing	-£18,643	-£14,634	-£10,000
Digital Marketing	£0	-£19,782	-£35,000
Hospitality	-£10	-£506	-£1,000
Total Expenditure	-£131,175	-£220,507	-£209,252
Net Position	£61,825	£29,774	£62,691

Appendix 3 NI Connections Communications Calendar 2014

	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
	28	29	30	1	2
May 2014	5	6 Food	7	8	9
	12	13	14	15	16
	19 NY Clipper	20	21	22	23
	26	27	28	29	30
Jun 2014	2 San Diego BIO	3	4	5	6
	9	10	11	12	13
	16	17	18	19	20
	23	24	25	26	27
	30	1 CEO report	2	3	4
Jul 2014	7	8	9	10	11
	14	15	16	17	18
	21	22	23	24	25
	28	29	30	31	1
Aug 2014	4	5	6	7	8
	11	12	13	14	15
	18 Dubai	19	20	21	22
	25 Johannesburg	26	27	28	29
	1	2 Music	3	4	5
Sep 2014	8	9	10	11	12
	15	16	17	18	19
	22	23	24	25	26
	29	30	1	2	3
Oct 2014	6	7 CEO report	8	9	10
	13	14	15	16	17
	20 Shanghai	21	22	23	24
	27	28	29	30	31
Nov 2014	3	4 eZine	5	6	7
	10	11	12	13	14
	17	18	19	20	21
	24	25	26	27	28
	1	2	3	4	5
Dec 2014	8	9	10	11	12
	15	16 Xmas Card	17	18	19
	22	23	24	25	26
	29	30	31	1	2

KEY

Invitations

eZines

CEO reports

Xmas Card