



LABOUR RELATIONS AGENCY

BUSINESS PLAN

2011/12

INTRODUCTION

This Business Plan sets out the work that the Labour Relations Agency (the Agency) will undertake during the 2011-2012 financial year. This Plan covers the first performance year of the three year Agency Corporate Plan 2011-2014.

OVERVIEW

From a strategic perspective this business plan addresses the work of the Agency in relation to:

1. The DEL Review of Workplace Dispute Resolution 2010.
2. The DEL Review of the Agency 2010.
3. Improving the delivery of Agency services on a value for money basis.
4. The review of DEL and Agency funding currently at consultation stage.

Throughout this coming year the Agency will continue to work in partnership with the social partners and key stakeholders in supporting employers, employees and their representatives in improving employment relations throughout Northern Ireland.

In line with the recommendations of the DEL Review of the Agency 2010 and the Agency's commitment to delivering value for money services we will be developing a more systemic approach to demonstrating the effectiveness, efficiency and economy achieved by the Agency.

As a first step the performance indicators for our operational services and corporate performance 2011-12 are set out below. These indicators will be subject to review as we develop and refine our approach to measuring the impact of our work.

STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES AND PERFORMANCE INDICATORS

The strategic objectives deriving from the Corporate Plan 2011-14 and requiring action 2011-12 are set out below. The Corporate Plan 2011-14 indicates a timeline for some of the 2011-14 actions. Where this is the case the timeline is highlighted.

SERVICES

STRATEGIC OBJECTIVE	ACTION 2011-12
1. To have in place a generic arbitration scheme by March 2012.	1.1 Agree Scheme with DEL 1.2 Implement PR programme for Scheme launch 1.3 Prepare publications and revise operational guidelines 1.4 Appoint additional arbitrators to Agency panel 1.5 Develop and implement an evaluation process
2. To have in place by 30 April 2011 and evaluated by 31 March 2012 a pre-claim referral process from the Helpline to Agency conciliation services.	2.1 Implement PR programme for launch of service 2.2 Undertake staff training 2.3 Revise documentation and operational guidelines 2.4 Develop and implement evaluation process
3. To have in place a customer focus strategy by November 2011	3.1 Research and draft strategy 3.2 Introduce pilot impact assessment processes for mediation, arbitration and collective conciliation services 3.3 Review and revise Advisory Services impact assessment measures 3.4 Establish a customer focus programme for the corporate services directorate

SERVICE PERFORMANCE INDICATORS

LRA Helpline
a) The average Helpline waiting time is to be less than 1.5 minutes
b) The Helpline lost call rate is to be less than 15%
c) The Level of Helpline customer satisfaction is to be no less than 75%
d) 70% of callers are to indicate that they took clear action following a call to the Helpline

Employment Relations Assistance
a) Cases received are to be completed within 3 months of receipt
b) The Level of customer satisfaction for advisory workshops is to be no less than 75%
c) 50% of users are to introduce/amend documentation following Agency assistance

Good Practice Seminars
a) The Level of customer satisfaction for good practice seminars is to be no less than 75%
b) At least 80% of delegates are to report that their learning requirements had been met
c) At least 55 % of delegates are to report that attendance at a seminar resulted in a review or change in policy or practice
d) At least 10% of delegates are to be from organisations who have not previously attended an Agency seminar.

Individual Conciliation

- a) The days saved deriving from no more than 20% of individual rights claims, excluding strike outs/insolvency, being heard at Tribunals
- b) No less than 75% of pre claim referrals from the Helpline agree to conciliation within 3 months of receipt

Collective Conciliation

- a) Involvement of Agency in all reported disputes

Mediation

- a) Mediations undertaken within timescales agreed in operational guidelines

Arbitration/Independent Appeal Hearings

- a) Arbitrations/Independent Appeal hearings undertaken within timescales agreed in operational guidelines

PROMOTION

STRATEGIC OBJECTIVE	ACTION 2011-12
4. To have a revised public relations strategy in place by December 2011.	4.1 Research and draft strategy 4.2 Determine feasibility of establishing baseline levels of awareness of Agency 4.3 Hold annual LRA seminar
5. To have determined by 31 March 2012 an approach to establishing a stakeholder engagement strategy by September 2012.	5.1 Review best practice 5.2 Canvass key stakeholders on their needs 5.3 Determine outcomes and objectives 5.4 Determine structure and processes required 5.5 Bring international employment relations best practice to NI and the Agency

PROMOTION PERFORMANCE INDICATORS**Utilisation of Agency Services**

- a) A two percentage points rise in the utilisation of Agency Advisory services

Awareness of the Agency

- a) 75% of surveyed clients/stakeholders reporting a greater degree of awareness of the Agency, it's services and publications

Customer Base

- a) A two percentage points growth in our Advisory Services customer base

Impact of Conference/Seminars

- a) At least 75% of conference/seminar delegates reporting that their thinking on employment relations had been influenced

PEOPLE

STRATEGIC OBJECTIVE	ACTION 2011-12
6. To retain liP bronze accreditation by 30 November 2011.	6.1 Implement an liP action plan 6.2 Upgrade performance management system (by September 2012) 6.3 Undertake pilot accreditation 6.4 Evaluate and revise training and development provision (by October 2011)
7. To have in place an employee engagement and recognition strategy by 31 March 2012.	7.1 Establish joint working team 7.2 Research and draft strategy 7.3 Agree and have in place accredited staff training at each grade (by 31 March 2012)

PEOPLE PERFORMANCE INDICATORS

Staffing
a) Percentage of staff reporting satisfaction in staff attitude surveys improves 10% on prior year results
b) Percentage of staff reporting satisfaction in stress risk assessments improves 10% on prior results
c) Absence is contained within 4% per annum per year

RESOURCES AND ACCOUNTABILITY

STRATEGIC OBJECTIVE	ACTION 2011-12
8. Develop Agency corporate governance capability by 31 March 2012.	8.1 Have in place Memoranda of Understanding between the LRA and OITFET and the LRA and the Industrial Court 8.2 Undertake review of Board capability in addressing corporate governance (by November 2011)
9. Demonstrate Agency value for money by 31 March 2014	9.1 Research and draft a value for money strategy 9.2 Determine the economic and social impact of Agency services (by 31 March 2012). 9.3 Establish unit costing 9.4 Attain IS security accreditation 9.5 Replace Individual Conciliation management System.

RESOURCES AND ACCOUNTABILITY PERFORMANCE INDICATORS

Finance
a) Supplier payments are better than 95% within 30 days and 50% within 10 days
b) Bank balances at year end are fully covered by accruals and tangible commitments
Audit
a) At least "satisfactory" ratings in internal and external audit assurances
b) Full compliance recorded in stewardship statements (e.g. Permanent Secretary)
IT
a) 95% uptime within computer infrastructure
b) Successful annual test of IS Continuity Plan
c) Full compliance with standards / targets in IS Managed Services contract
Facilities
a) 70% staff believe facilities are adequate based on staff satisfaction questionnaire
b) Zero accidents arise for inclusion in the Health and Safety Accident Book per annum

RESOURCE MANAGEMENT 2011-12

DEL on 10 January 2011 published its consultative document on the 2011 to 2015 funding allocations. Although not explicit in the document, the Agency has been informed that there will be a significant fixed reduction in its baseline of £3,745k in each of the four years 2011-15. The reduction in the Agency's budget for 2011-12 is, at the time of writing, unknown.

For business planning purposes, there is a current assumption that the establishment of 67.8 full time equivalent staff will be maintained.

However, maintaining a full establishment means that any reduction in budget will fall on discretionary spend. This is the approach the Agency will, subject to the extent of the reduction in budget, be taking. The areas likely to be significantly reduced in resource are as follows:

- Cover for maternity leave etc: resulting in either the redistribution of work or its delay or suspension.
- Cutbacks in General Administration of up to 20%: resulting in the reduction of, for example, public relations work. This may have an impact on our ability to promote alternative dispute resolution.
- Profiling of training by year with initial cuts of the order of 50%: this could jeopardise staff morale and our attainment of liP.
- Conservative assumptions on the cost of IS Managed Services. Linked to this is the fact that we may not have sufficient funds to introduce a new ICMS system. This would be a very serious risk to frontline services.

New initiatives identified through the corporate plan 2011-14 will be implemented alongside normal ongoing operational processes and since opportunities for

additional staffing resource will be very limited, in general terms, new initiatives will be progressed through:

- The SMT and Employment Relations Managers where there is some flexibility to reprioritise and select between different sets of work;
- Other staff; only where new methods of working arising from the corporate plan lead to efficiencies so that more can be achieved with less;
- External sources such as managed services, substitution for internal skills and as appropriate and where a clear need is identified, consultant support.

At the time of the submission of this plan to DEL the Agency awaits confirmation of its allocation of funding 2011-12. On receipt of the funding allocation this Business Plan and related Corporate Plan will be reviewed.