



Ussel.

Championing Ability.

CORPORATE PLAN
2017–2021

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USEL has been developing a number of new business opportunities over recent years. The increasing challenges and the changing nature of the sector within which the organisation operates will present significant challenges over the period of this Corporate Plan.

The organisation, while cognisant of the challenges ahead, is confident about the opportunities, which will allow the organisation to continue to provide, promote and support opportunities for our key client base. This ambitious Corporate Plan identifies the outcomes we expect by the end of the planning period.

The Northern Ireland Executive recently published a draft Programme for Government. As a Non Departmental Public Body within the Department for Communities, USEL is uniquely placed within the disability sector to assist in the delivery of some key government objectives. We will continue to adhere to the principles of Corporate Governance and public accountability, as well as delivering value for money in achieving our Vision to be the lead provider in helping people with disabilities and health related conditions into employment.

USEL has a clear commercial focus, consistent with our Social Enterprise Model and during the life of this plan it is our intention to identify new business opportunities, which will support our aim to be a sustainable people centred

organisation that adds value through respect for others and commitment to excellence. We will put in place appropriate arrangements to monitor performance and to measure progress. We aim to be at the forefront in the development of a circular economy and to be recognised as an effective partner for collaboration.

Consistent with the Programme for Government, this plan has been developed with a clear focus on outcomes which have been developed in each of our five strategic areas:

- > **Social entrepreneurship**
- > **Business planning for a growth agenda**
- > **Developing as a learning organisation**
- > **Stakeholder engagement**
- > **Good governance.**

The Board of USEL is proud of the achievements the organisation has already accomplished, but we are realistic about the challenging business environment. We are committed to the strategic direction set out in this Corporate Plan and we are confident that it sets a clear direction of travel to build upon what has already been achieved so that our employees and clients will realise their aspirations and ambitions through employment, enterprise and training. We believe that such long term outcomes will ensure USEL's continuing success.

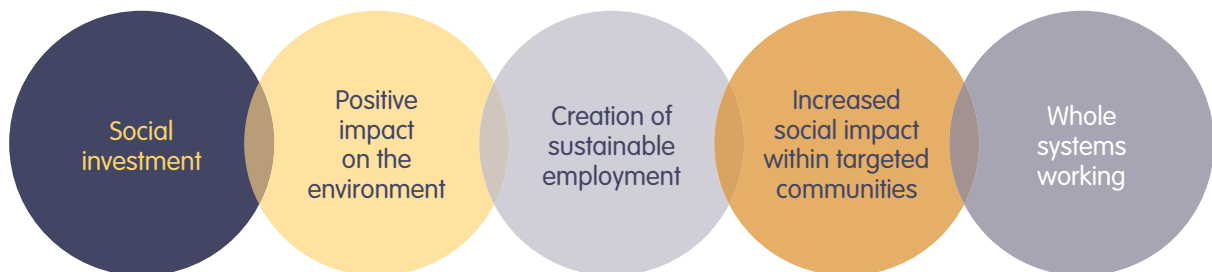


They say the only constant is change, and certainly USEL has gone through intense change over the last year, both from within the organisation and through wider systemic changes.

Whatever changes there are, USEL will always hold to our social purpose of championing ability and securing sustainable employment for our clients. Our core values of working alongside individuals to ensure they realise their ambitions and aspirations guide us daily.

We know that public money is limited, we know there are competing demands and we know too that the need for our services is growing. How we design and deliver our work plans in the coming years is all-important and how we grow as a business, necessarily means we need to understand the impact of these wider changes all around us – to make sure we are future proof, agile and responsive.

For example, we already see a shift in attitude towards climate change; with tough customer expectations for ethical reusable goods increasingly being placed on companies and the public sector to embrace more green living. Recycling may well become the norm in coming years with people being more environmentally active within their communities. USEL wants to be at the forefront of moving towards a circular economy, driving our businesses to create bespoke services, tailored to support the needs of the people and communities we serve.



In developing this plan, we have looked closely at the wider system in which USEL operates and have set out a clear value chain, for example, Appendix 1 highlights the relevant Draft Programme for Government targets and how USEL can assist in delivering them. Reflecting on where we have been, where we are and how we move forward, this plan identifies the **five key strategic areas** we will develop over the coming four years. It also provides a number of strategic actions to guide our work in 2017–2018.

- > **Social entrepreneurship**
- > **Business planning for a growth agenda**
- > **Developing as a learning organisation**
- > **Stakeholder engagement**
- > **Good governance**



USEL was established in 1962 to fulfil an act of Parliament to provide supported paid employment for disabled people. In 1980, USEL expanded through the acquisition of the 'Workshops for the 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 for people with a visual impairment since it was established in 1871.

Currently, we turnover approximately £6m. We employ, support and train up to 1,500 people with disabilities or health-related conditions across the province. We directly employ approximately 100 staff, based across Northern Ireland in our six regional offices including Belfast, Londonderry, Portadown and Omagh.

As in all sectors, 2016/17 has proved to be challenging for a number of wider economic reasons including a reduction in local government spending, a challenging political environment underpinned by the proposed biggest change in the EU in a generation with the purposed withdrawal by the UK from the single market.

In the midst of the outlined changing environment, USEL has continued to adapt to meet a wide range of challenging conditions. Whilst adjusting to meet these challenges, USEL has delivered a range of very positive outcomes allowing us to effectively plan for the next stage of our development as a social enterprise covering the period from 2017 to 2021.



Where we've been, where we are, where we are headed:



**who we are
and what
we do**

Purpose

We are a social enterprise born to assist people with disabilities and health related conditions into employment

Our vision

is to be the lead provider in helping people with disabilities gain employment

Values

We strive to be a sustainable, people centred organisation that adds value through respect for others and commitment to excellence

As a starting point USEL undertook a short horizon scanning exercise to identify the main drivers of change likely to impact on the business over the coming decade. Looking, for example, at the draft Programme for Government and a range of social, technological and economic factors, the Board identified five key strategic areas that will need to be developed to ensure we fulfil our social mission and create a sustainable business within ever-changing and complex environments.

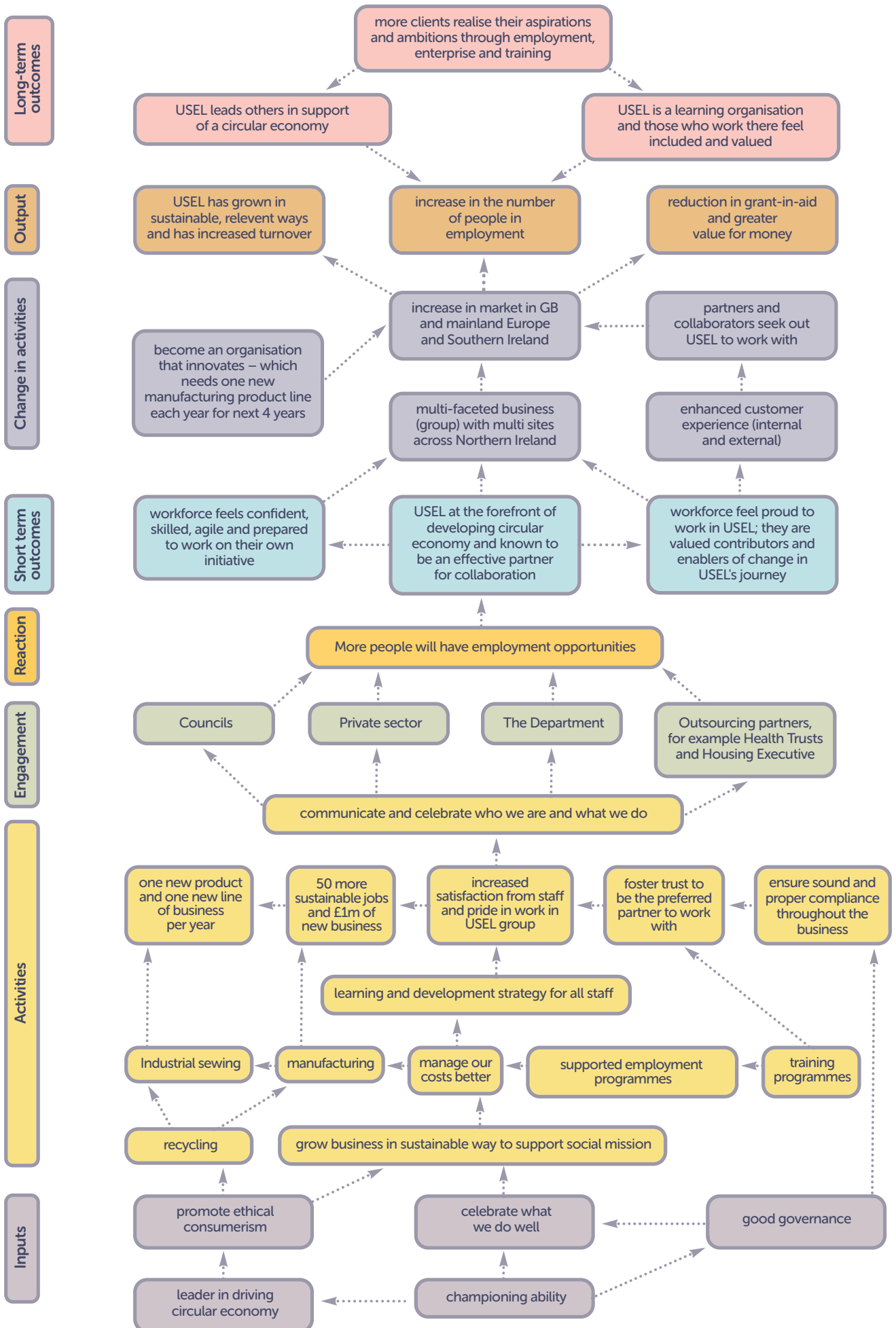
We then set out our theory of change; our story of how we will get from the here-and-now to achieving our long-term vision, over the life of our Corporate Plan. That story was described through a step-by-step logic model.

In looking closely at the logic model below, a series of strategic actions for 2017/18 were identified to ensure progress in the right direction. These actions, set out in this plan, will be monitored and evaluated throughout the year by the Board to ensure impacts and outcomes are being met.





Our path to achieving our plan



1

Social entrepreneurship

- > In 2016–17 we were recognised at a national level for environmental best practice, as a result of our mattress recycling project, as the Ireland Green Apple Champion.
- > We opened our first factory shop outlet, increasing our ability to sell direct to the public and increase margins with cash at point of sale.

Where we are:

We are committed to championing ability and creating employment opportunities for those we work with. USEL has a strong social purpose and this shapes our identity.

Where we are headed:

We will create new opportunities in ethically sustainable ways and we want to grow our business in enterprising ways. To do that, we know we need to develop our partnerships to gain strategic advantage.

2017 – 21

Over the course of our Corporate Plan we will identify one new product and one new line of business per year

2017 – 18

- 1 We will create one new product/service within manufacturing/circular economy
- 2 We will create one new line of business
- 3 We will create one new strategic partnership

We expect that by undertaking these actions the following outcomes and impacts will result by the end of our Corporate Plan:

- 1 USEL will be seen as an organisation that innovates
- 2 USEL will become a leader in promoting sustainable and socially just business models
- 3 USEL will support others, as a leader, in pursuing the circular economy

2

Business planning for a growth agenda

- In 2016–17 USEL grew its bed manufacturing sales by 250% from 2015–16 position
- In 2016–17, mattress recycling throughput was increased by 220% from 2015–16
- USEL secured additional investment of approximately £250k, from NIEA, for new capital equipment to drive the capability of the circular economy function

Where we are:

USEL's position in the market is strong. The business currently recycles 12,000 mattresses and we have launched a new mattress recycling centre – one of only two in Ireland.

Where we are headed:

We will continue to financially model our plans against the skills and resources of the organisation, developing new services and products to take to market and helping to create markets where possible.

2017 – 21

Over the course of our Corporate Plan we will create 50 sustainable jobs, creating £1m of new business.

2017 – 18

- 1 We will increase bed production by 25 per cent
- 2 We will recycle an additional 10,000 mattress (income from circular economy to grow by 50 per cent)
- 3 We will increase employment services participants by 50 people

We expect that by undertaking these actions the following outcomes and impacts will result by the end of our Corporate Plan:

- An increase in the number of people in supported employment
- An increase in the market share of UK, mainland Europe and Southern Ireland
- An increase of USEL's turnover

3

Developing as a learning organisation

- In 2016–17, USEL conducted an employee engagement survey that will inform the 2017–18 Employee Engagement Plan.
- We implemented a new employee performance appraisal system that will inform the 2017–18 Learning and Development Strategy.

Where we are:

Within USEL we model the behaviours and values we want to see in the wider system – fostering trust and creating a working environment for clients and staff to fulfil their ability. Being a learning organisation is to recognise that solutions are often emergent and those with the sharpest focus are often those who are closest to the issue. Everyone’s voice must be heard when managing change.

Where we are headed:

We will work hard to develop to improve communication throughout the organisation, provide a learning and development focus for staff and support everyone to be pro-active, experiment, take managed risk and manage change well.

2017 – 21

Over the course of our Corporate Plan we will have increased staff satisfaction, with staff feeling valued and proud to be part of USEL

2017 – 18

- 1 We will conduct an annual staff satisfaction survey, using the results to guide our on-going strategic approach
- 2 We will design and implement a new Learning and Development Strategy for all staff, including change management training
- 3 All managers will go through leadership and management training
- 4 We will put in place a new internal communication plan to effectively engage with the entire USEL team

We expect that by undertaking these actions the following outcomes and impacts will result by the end of our Corporate Plan:

- Those in the workforce will feel more confident, skilled and prepared to work on their own initiative
- The workforce will be enabled to manage change better and work with uncertainty
- The workforce will feel proud and valued contributors to USEL

4

Stakeholder engagement

In 2016–17, USEL identified a number of key strategic partnerships across various departments, such as manufacturing and circular economy. These partnerships will be imperative in driving the growth agenda from 2017–2021.

Where we are:

USEL is an important broker of knowledge, ideas and relationships in Northern Ireland. It works across systems boundaries with a wide range of stakeholders. It works well with stakeholders, continually scanning, testing and identifying the need for new markets.

Where we are headed:

Working to a growth agenda means we will need to understand the increasingly changing needs of our customers, partners and stakeholders. Communication is key; spreading the word of USEL’s mission and work, particularly around the circular economy.

2017 – 21

Over the course of our Corporate Plan we will work to foster trust to be the preferred partner to work with.

2017 – 18

- 1 We will conduct a stakeholder mapping exercise around social impact.
- 2 We will collect information and undertake research for market intelligence, to include emerging markets
- 3 We will develop and implement a clear, measurable external communication strategy to ensure we receive return on our investment

We expect that by undertaking these actions the following outcomes and impacts will result by the end of our Corporate Plan:

- > Partners and collaborators will increasingly seek out USEL as the partner of choice
- > USEL will become a multi-faceted business with sites across Northern Ireland

5

Good governance

- > In 2016–17, USEL implemented plans to reduce its annual operating costs by £275k, without a detrimental impact on the organisation.
- > USEL continued to obtain appropriate approvals for a range of business cases to assist the growth of the organisation.

Where we are:

USEL has a full business support service to allow operations to focus on their delivery and growth.

Where we are headed:

We will continue to ensure sound and proper compliance throughout our business and manage our building facilities to provide an excellent platform for business delivery.

2017 – 21

Over the course of our Corporate Plan we will ensure the right skills, capacity and resources across the business to ensure we are financially sustainable.

2017 – 18

- 1 We will adhere to our Corporate Governance responsibilities at all times, as required by the relevant government department
- 2 We will work towards implementing a new integrated system for health and safety, environment and quality improvement
- 3 We will hold management team and board strategic away days
- 4 We will aim to deliver unqualified accounts

We expect that by undertaking these actions the following outcomes and impacts will result by the end of our Corporate Plan:

- > **USEL will be managing its costs better**
- > **USEL will be able to diversify its business model as required**
- > **USEL will be seen as a value-driven organisation**

How our plan aligns to Government priorities

In recent years, Government and others have become more focussed on ensuring better outcomes are achieved for people. Service delivery is no longer thought of in silos and we recognise the complexity and interconnectedness of, for example, education, employment, health and wellbeing and economic growth. Our Corporate Plan has been informed from a whole-systems perspective and will deliver upon a number of the outcome indicators as set out in the recent draft Programme for Government. Our Corporate Plan is centred upon a wide range of activities for growth to achieve meaningful outcomes for everyone we work with.

