



Department for the
Economy
www.economy-ni.gov.uk

PLACE10X CALL FOR EVIDENCE

SUMMARY OF RESPONSES & NEXT STEPS

DECEMBER 2023



CONTENTS

Part: 1 Overview & Next Steps	3
Executive Summary	4
Themes	6
Overview	6
Conclusion	8
The Way Forward	8
Work is already underway to embed a place-based focus in programmes	9
Part 2: Review of Responses	10
1 Introduction	11
2 Methodology	13
3 Analysis of Responses	15

PART 1

**OVERVIEW &
NEXT STEPS**

Executive Summary

This [Call for Evidence](#) was issued to allow the Department for the Economy (DfE) to better understand how *place* (particularly *place* in the DfE remit) is understood by stakeholders such as local councils, other public bodies, NICS departments, local industry, and third sector organisations. The aim was to start a discussion that can highlight gaps, identify successes to be built upon, and to enable officials and a future Minister to shape departmental interventions.

Welcomed: The [Call](#) was broadly welcomed with only 2% of respondents suggesting there was no need for some form of structured sub-regional approach involving DfE. In meetings with external stakeholders there was a perception that DfE was behind other NICS departments such as the Department for Communities in terms of *place*-based interventions, and therefore this work stream should be a priority. The willingness to engage and develop a ground up approach was praised and there was an appetite to support the department in realising this new way of working.

Alignment: There was some caution that targeting needs and priorities at a sub-regional and local level will require a wider approach across government. DfE should engage with other structures such as Labour Market Partnerships and Community Planning Partnerships, as well as ensuring the internal structures focused on skills, further and higher education, and energy are integrated into solutions. This latter point refers to the need to ensure there are no unintended consequences of silo working within DfE, and to the heavily stressed concern that there is no increase in bureaucracy or duplication of effort.

Flexibility: This was a word repeated often – in terms of how to set local targets and how to create policies and programmes dependent on the circumstances of the area involved. This included thoughts on the need to take advantage of cross border collaboration and that custom / bespoke sub-regional areas may be needed for certain work streams rather than a strict geographic demarcation. The need for both form to follow function and an outcomes focused strategy was raised frequently.

Geography: There was little consensus on how sub-regions should be defined. This was not unexpected. However, there was more concession in meetings than written responses that something would be needed to start with and maybe once established more customised solutions would be developed. There was caution not to adopt a council ward level approach – this may be too granular for DfE activities (at least initially), but it was recognised that it could be appropriate for some projects where other departments and partners are involved. The City and Growth Deals geographies found favour amongst those that had positive experience of working in or with them, and that existing partnerships were a good foundation to build upon. Some were clear that these may not solve the spatial disparities and that the evidence base should be reviewed. Some were not convinced these could solve local disparities given the size of Deal regions.

Alternatives: Several inputs suggested that a sector-based approach may be better than a strictly geographic division, or that commonalities or shared economic characteristics should be the determining factor. Rural inputs were clear that connectivity issues outside the DfE remit were a major hurdle to determining regions.

Role: Most stakeholders welcomed greater DfE participation, whether it was merely to facilitate and co-ordinate, to create central government momentum, or in providing resources and support. Most agreed that there was a need to build on existing structures and successes rather than a redesign. Some criticised that this was long overdue. There was some concern that new Departmental involvement or structures could jeopardise successful existing partnerships and create duplication.

Partnership: As well as ensuring a whole of government approach and ensuring no further duplication, many respondents advocated more collaborative working and co-design from the earliest stages. Ensuring alignment with localities could allow connections to be made of bottom-up and top-down programmes, although there were cautionary comments regarding the delegation of responsibility and division of resource. Clarity of purpose and consistency of messaging was highlighted as essential.

Inclusion: Social and environmental priorities were raised as important factors, although this also suggested the 10X Vision and delivery plans did not have visibility with stakeholders at this stage. Investment in education and skills was widely suggested as a method to deliver such priorities. DfE was urged to consider deprivation, wellbeing, and happiness outcomes.

Focus: In terms of *place* itself, there is universal agreement that interventions should focus on tackling inequality and disadvantage, but no overall agreement on how this should be done. Several responses criticised DfE as not understanding what was required at local levels, and that the [Call](#) lacked substance on how to do this. Establishing outcomes as well as targets is important.

Success: When measuring interventions, many suggested the need for more quality of life, wellbeing, and happiness targets to be factored in alongside the 10X 'economic' metrics such as productivity and past DfE focus on more jobs. Creating a link between local plans and those inclusion metrics will create a pathway to identifying interventions and success could be found in recognising social value and local wealth creation.

So What? There were many voices calling for collaboration, but one or two candid responses in meetings made it clear that they needed to identify what is in this for them. Some made it clear that they had made great strides to be competitive and that any interventions should not look to penalise their efforts. Some cited a lack of resource so anything new had to be lean, while others saw this as an opportunity to design new programmes that broke from the past.

Themes

Role DfE needs to be more involved in *place*-based interventions

Presence Invest NI needs to be more visible sub-regionally

Partnership DfE needs to work with others to succeed

Co-production DfE needs to be a facilitator and supporter

Additionality through alignment The NICS needs to work together on *place*

Lean There needs to be neither duplication of effort nor additional bureaucracy

Resource Actions not words – partners need to commit time and money

Place Design needs to be flexible not just follow arbitrary sub-regional boundaries

Overview

The **Call for Evidence** was launched on 10th May on the DfE website. A link to the Call was also distributed to stakeholders internally and externally. The **Call** ended on 9th July 2023.

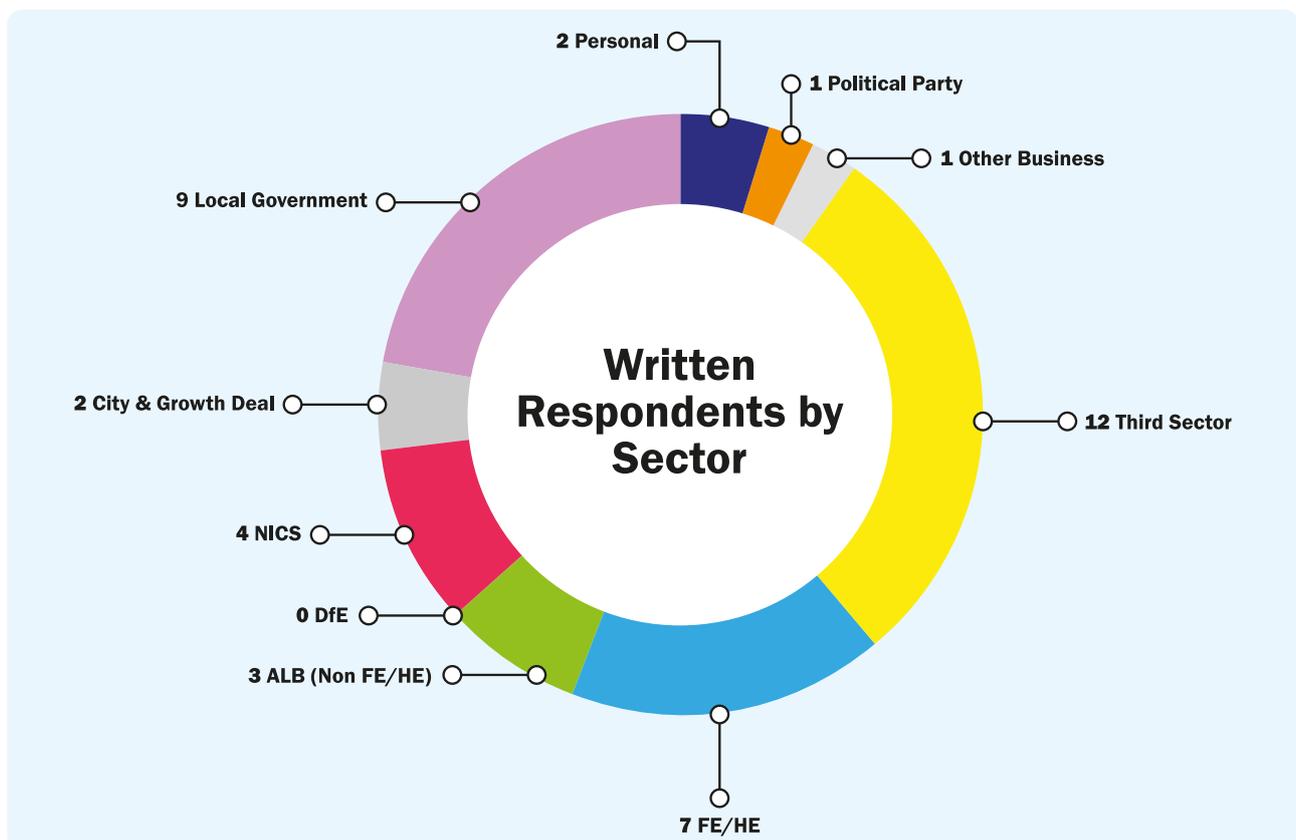


Figure 1: Written Respondents by Sector

In total there were 44 written responses, 41 providing views. The Place10X team also engaged with interested stakeholders through a series of 45 meetings during the Call. Several follow-up meetings have also occurred since the Call ended.

From the 44 written responses to the questions:

- 42 from organisations
- 2 personal submissions
- 3 provided information / reports, or were asking to be kept informed

75% were detailed, 14% were limited, and the remainder were personal opinions or for information. The Call was downloaded 752 times.

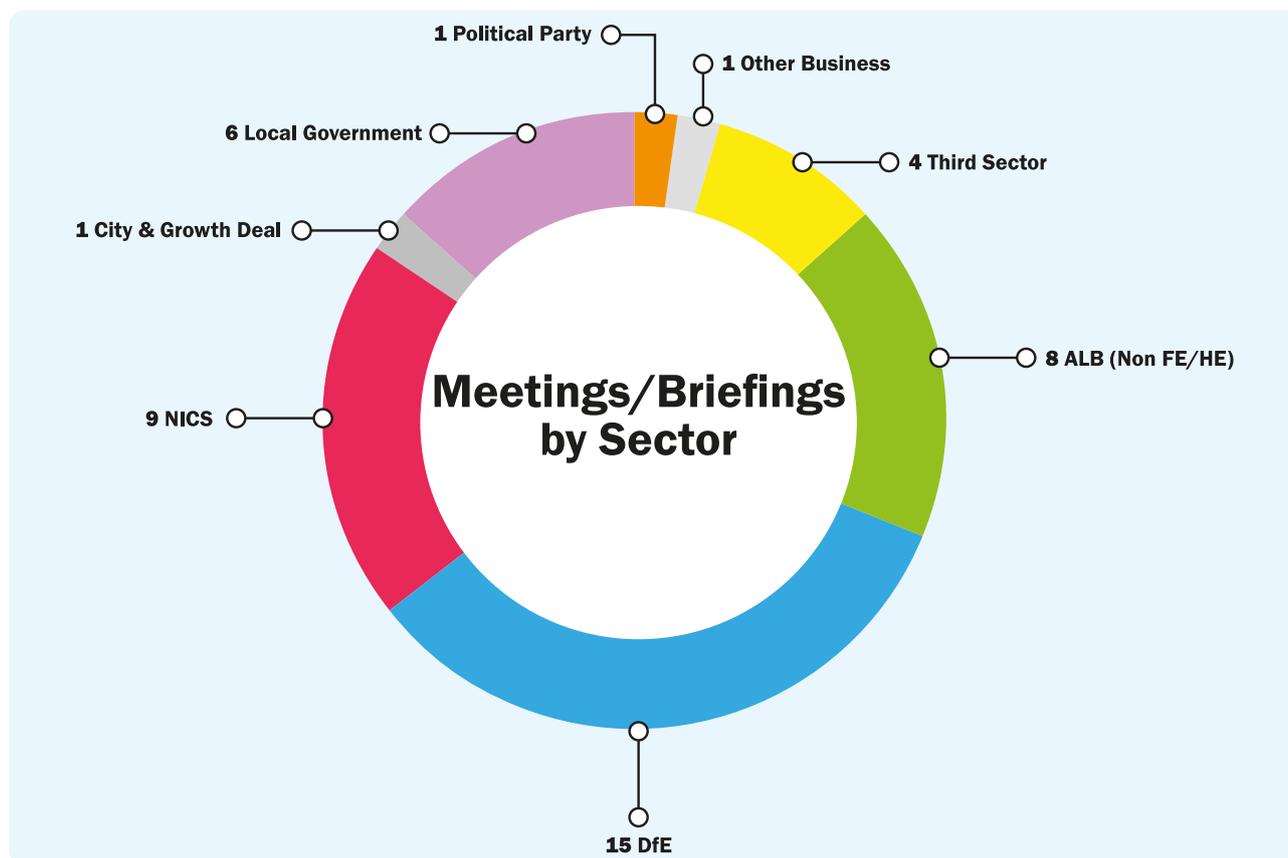


Figure 2: Meetings/Briefings by Sector

There were 30 external meetings and briefings and 15 internal (i.e. DfE). Other meetings that gathered information and informally briefed staff are not recorded here. An engagement plan has been created from this exercise as part of the landscape delivery review to explore views further.

Conclusion

Overall, DfE exploring this space has been welcomed and there is cautious optimism that significant change can be delivered through more *place*-based policy making and programme delivery. The problems in taking on this challenge are arguably self-evident, and the solutions are – as always – easily articulated if difficult to deliver, but there are examples of success to build on.

This [Call](#) has crystallised some early thinking within the Department and energised parts of DfE to transform delivery by considering how a *place*-based approach can be implemented. This new evidence base allows DfE to make informed and therefore better decision making.

Contributions have been frank and honest, constructive criticism has been broadly fair, and the need for DfE to do more is clear, but most importantly there is support for this direction of travel with offers to co-produce a strategic response. Alignment across government with more linkages from top to bottom and a wider focus on building an inclusive economy are important to all contributors so should inform future policy and programme initiatives.

The Way Forward

- DfE will develop a [Sub-Regional Economic Plan with measurable targets](#). This plan will be co-produced with councils and their partners to refine their economic priorities and proposition. It will do this within existing structures such as the Community Planning Partnerships and taking advice from SOLACE NI ERG¹. The outcomes and targets will link to 10X objectives to allow development of targeted *place*-based interventions to lessen disparities. This will be completed [by September 2024](#).
- [Policy principles and a toolkit will be developed for DfE](#) and partner organisations to evaluate their *place*-based response. Awareness raising and training for staff will be undertaken [by March 2024](#).
- Metrics will be confirmed and a [Place10X dataset](#) will be developed [by January 2024](#).
- As an interim approach to allow the immediate design and implementation of *place*-based initiatives, the [Invest NI Regional Office structure will be used to determine the sub-regional boundaries](#). During the development of the Sub-Regional Economic Plan this will be reviewed with councils and final sub-regional geographic boundaries will be agreed [by August 2024](#).

1 Society of Local Authority Chief Executives (Northern Ireland) Economic Recovery Group

Work is already underway to embed a place-based focus in programmes

- Ambition to Grow, an Invest NI fund designed specifically to help micro, small, and medium-sized local enterprises to create jobs and grow exports, has staff on the ground working to increase sub-regional participation.
- Scaling the Edge, an Innovate UK programme that supports early-stage SMEs plan and target market opportunities, has an internal target with DfE to encourage 60% of applications outside Belfast (the first two cohorts resulted in 66%).
- An Industrial Land and Property project is proceeding to co-produce a pilot with local councils to address sub-regions challenges and inequalities.
- DfE is developing new *place*-based apprenticeship programme proposals that will ensure people living in areas of deprivation are aware of, have access to, and successfully undertake apprenticeships, and encourage employers to diversify their hiring approach to foster talent on their doorstep.
- There are several proposals under consideration as part of the philanthropic package developed around the visit of the Special Envoy to Northern Ireland for Economic Affairs. One example is embedding staff aligned to each Labour Market Partnership to facilitate SMEs engaging with the apprenticeship system, and to work on the ground with marginalised communities to promote apprenticeships to those who don't traditionally access them in large numbers.
- The draft tourism strategy reflects the ambition to widen the appeal of sub-regional locations to visitors, to strengthen the domestic market, and to enrich the lives of residents all year round.
- The development of tech clusters can embed local expertise and skills, lessening the need for relocation to find better paying jobs. A consultation underway is asking if it would be beneficial for sub-regions to focus on specific technologies.

There are many other opportunities in the DfE remit to develop *place*-based interventions that support the 10X Vision. Some teams already offer local services that could be expanded or refocused. Some regional level policies have the potential to become more targeted to tackle economic disparities and inequalities. Examining why these exist across the worst and best performing areas will allow a critical evaluation of which initiatives should be prioritised. Conditionality of funding and regulatory change are other levers that could be used.

Teams across the Department are considering these areas and more to develop new projects and pivoting current work towards that will feed into the Sub-Regional Economic Plan in 2024.

PART 2

**REVIEW OF
RESPONSES**

1 Introduction

Background

DfE is responsible for the economy across Northern Ireland and the [10X Vision](#)² is the Department's plan to create a pathway to transform the entire economy innovatively, inclusively, and sustainably at a regional level. This is a long-term plan where Northern Ireland will become one of the top performing small advanced economies in the world.

With 10X driving ambition at the macro level, and councils leading economic development at a local level alongside statutory partners such as Invest NI, there is a need to consider the sub-regional focus and how the three levels link together. Applying a *place* lens to this approach will further enhance the opportunities to reduce disparities and harness the unique strengths of an area.

To date, DfE policies and programmes have generally been macro level focused – that is across the whole of NI without being tailored to suit local circumstance. Some great work has been undertaken by departmental partners such as Invest NI (INI) through its [Regional Offices](#)³; or by colleges that have set up courses, training, and apprenticeships aligned with the needs of [local businesses](#)⁴; or Careers Service, who already offers guidance, information, and advice in 12 locations across NI. There has also been criticism, and the evidence shows inequalities are increasing so there needs to be a change of direction to address these. If [10X Delivery Plans](#)⁵ and local council economic and community plans are not linked there is a danger these disparities will grow.

Therefore, the [Call](#) was the first step in understanding what role the concept of *place* can play in economic policy making and programme delivery. How we embed this in partnership with delivery bodies is crucial to ensure that disparities and inequalities across the economy are reduced, and that the unlocked potential of communities is harnessed.

Work to date

The [10X Vision](#)⁶ is clear that *place*-based decision making and investment is key to making a difference for communities, and will be the glue that brings the whole strategy together. The Minister for the Economy ensured *place* was at the heart of this new strategic approach and a small team was set up in the City & Growth Deals Division to consider how to unite the three strands – innovation, sustainability, and inclusion – throughout sub-regions and local council areas.

2 [Department for the Economy website - 10x Economy Economic Vision](#)

3 [Invest NI website - About Us Where We Are](#)

4 [Department for the Economy website - Lyons announces further Assured Skills Collaborative Welding Academy at North West Regional College](#)

5 [Department for the Economy website - 10X Delivery Plan 2023-24](#)

6 [Department for the Economy website - A 10X Economy Northern Ireland's Decade of Innovation](#)

The Department set out in early 2023 to consider what a *place*-based approach was, and how this would affect policy making and programme delivery not just in DfE, but also in partner bodies such as Invest NI. Starting with a definition of *place* in line with that used by other NICS departments and local councils, DfE sought to consider how that applies strictly within the economic remit and hence this became [Place10X](#).

In May 2023, DfE published a [Call for Evidence](#)⁷ to create a body of information which will inform policy makers and a future Minister in the Department for the Economy of what central intervention and support is needed or wanted. This ran for just under 9 weeks and ended on 9 July 2023.

The Department for the Economy is not just responsible for economic policy, but also energy, tourism and telecoms, employment and skills programmes, further and higher education, and business regulation⁸. How these are integrated into [Place10X](#) and reflect the new challenge was discussed in parallel with the [Call](#), and an internal landscape delivery review will be completed by the end of 2023.

Engagement

The [Call](#) was promoted through partner networks and social media channels, and the [Place10X](#) team met with DfE business units and divisions, NICS departments, and held evidence gathering sessions with external stakeholders such as councils, arm's-length bodies and third sector organisations. 42 organisations provided written responses, 75% of which were detailed inputs; some stakeholders also provided relevant reports and analysis done in their own sector. 45 meetings were held in Derry-Londonderry, Omagh, Dungannon, Newry, and Belfast.

The Department for the Economy would like to thank those who took the time to submit a response to the [Call for Evidence](#) or participated in a meeting with the team.

⁷ [Department for the Economy website - Place10X A Sub Regional Economic Approach Call for Evidence](#)

⁸ [Department for the Economy website - About DfE](#)

2 Methodology

The [Call](#) is the second element of a three-part systematic research process to provide an evidence base for policy makers to deliver practical outputs. Part one was desk-based research undertaken in the second half of 2022; and concurrently with the development of the [Call for Evidence](#) a stakeholder mapping exercise was completed in the spring of 2023. A landscape delivery review started during the summer of 2023 and will complete by the end of the year.

Taken together the aim is to close the research-practice gap for DfE. New insights from meeting stakeholders and from inputs to the [Call](#) should interlink the evidence base and practice in Northern Ireland. Bringing together participants and their ideas could identify representative voices that could co-produce outcomes and target focused actions.

There were constraints on the research as resource was limited and there is a time bound aspect, meaning longitudinal study was limited to metrics already available. The sample size of meetings was kept manageable and purposeful by targeting those in relevant positions.

At the same time as the [Call](#) was launched the [Place10X](#) team also led the task and finish group considering *place*/sub-regional aspects of the [Independent Review of Invest NI](#)⁹. This delivered considerable complementarity and created a pathway for this research to put theory into practice. Synergies from the evidence gathering phase on both work streams accelerated strategic thinking and there is now a structure in place to develop a Sub-Regional Economic Plan with local targets in 2024.

Given the evidence base establishing nature of the [Call](#), qualitative methods were at the forefront of analysis. While an empathetic approach was used to give all views agency, challenge was employed during meetings to tease out detail, or to correct misconceptions on the approach to this work stream. All responses are weighted accordingly – whether personal opinions or organisational inputs – and all are treated with respect and fairness.

At meetings, it was made clear the team was open to constructive criticism of the approach, and any suggestions to improve our evidence gathering was taken seriously. These semi-structured meetings used some basic laddering with deviation to make participants more comfortable or to improve the flow of information. Some quantitative data was gathered but the focus was on lived experiences and varied perspectives.

There is no source given for opinions to protect confidentiality.

All written inputs were thoroughly reviewed by the team to identify commonalities, themes and establish an evidence base. Where relevant, some responses were shared with sector specialists within DfE to clarify points made.

9 [Department for the Economy website - Independent Review of Invest Northern Ireland Action Plan](#)

As this was a [Call for Evidence](#) and not a full consultation, stakeholders were welcome to supply papers and reports beyond the questions in the document. These will be considered by the team outside of this document, with the focus here on the written responses and notes taken by the [Place10X](#) team at meetings.

3 Analysis of Responses

Respondents

The [Call for Evidence](#) was publicly available, published on the DfE website, and open to anyone who wished to provide an input. It was sent directly to those identified in the stakeholder mapping – individuals and organisations – who were assessed as having an important role in sub-regional / *place*-based interventions who could help DfE in producing an effective evidence base.

At an organisational level, every council area responded directly or via a participatory organisation such as SOLACE NI ERG or a City and Growth Deal. Some NICS views were captured in direct meetings or via an inter-departmental working group considering *place*-based interventions. There is a need to revisit the outworking of this research with departments to ensure opportunities to collaborate are captured.

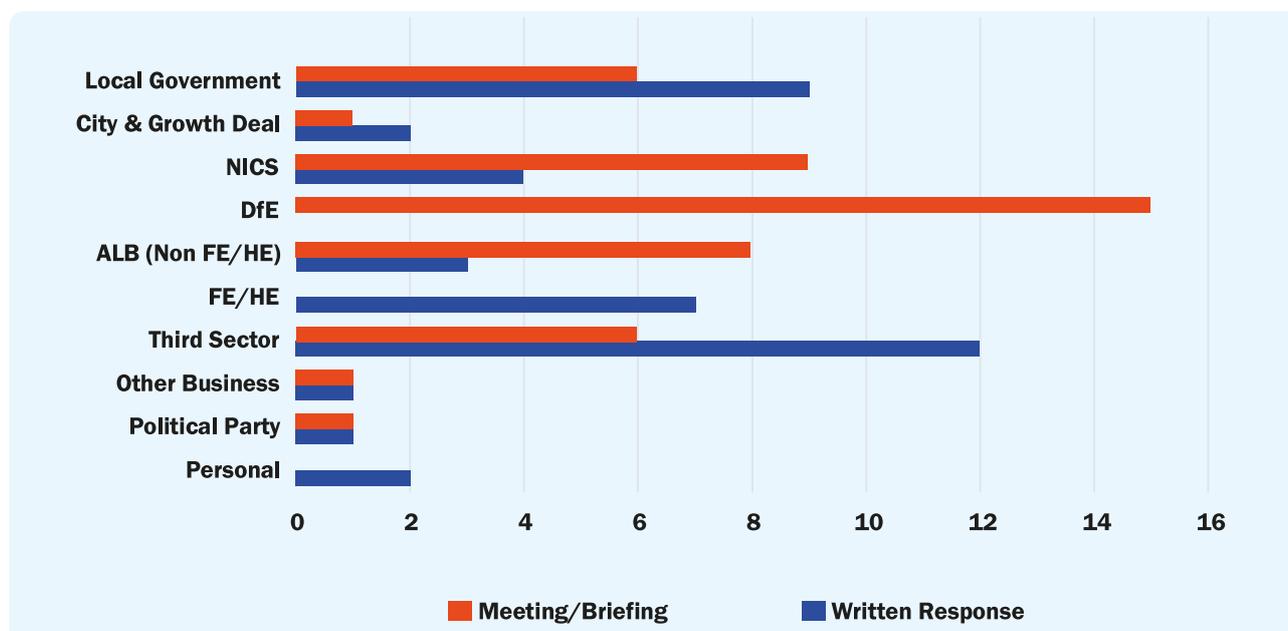


Figure 3: Respondents by Sector

DfE coverage was limited given the timescale but there is an ongoing engagement programme that is part of the landscape delivery review. All colleges and two universities were represented in written responses and inputs suggest there would be merit in a workshop with FE/HE colleagues in the department to develop this aspect of sub-regional policy. Likewise some third sector inputs suggest there is a greater benefit to be had in revisiting organisations when developing the ‘ask’ for each sub-region.

There is a need to involve more third sector and voluntary organisations – this will be important at the next stage when any draft plans are being produced.

Question 1 (a): What is the problem we are trying to solve? Firstly, there is a Departmental macro regional approach (10X) and there are local government approaches but no defined DfE sub-regional approach and no strategic link between those three levels. Is there a need for a sub-regional level?

This closed question asked respondents to comment on the problem to be solved and if there was a need for a sub-regional approach to the solution.

81% of written responses agreed there was a need for a policy approach at sub-regional level. Ten percentage points of this support is cautionary regarding the DfE role, specifically that there should be no new structures, no additional reporting requirements, and no duplication created by a new strategy. Just 2% were not supportive and 17% of responses had an unclear/nil response.

Response	Number	Percentage
Supportive	29	71%
Supportive but Cautionary	4	10%
Not supportive	1	2%
Unclear/Nil response	7	17%
TOTAL	41	100

Figure 4: Analysis is conducted on 41 detailed, limited, and personal responses

Summary of responses and comments

Most responses welcomed the recognition of the disparities and economic inequalities that exist across Northern Ireland and supported the focus DfE is now placing on tackling it. Most cited the need to increase local prosperity, but also to have a holistic approach making improvements across health, social inclusion, and civic pride. It was recognised that having shared goals and outcomes provide a commonality that can link macro and local approaches. Creating a focused DfE sub-regional approach to target needs and priorities at a local level was considered important.

However, while there was support, this approach will only work if it is designed to provide investment and resources at a local level in a manner that encourages collaboration rather than competition.

The lack of joined up government was raised, and past policy that focused on the ‘one size fits all’ method which rewarded areas that performed well yet failed to address those areas that did not. Many mentioned that a whole of government approach was needed, it also needed to be flexible as to how it tackled different areas and their needs and priorities.

It was argued that economic development cannot be looked at with a single focus but needs to be linked to other areas especially infrastructure, regeneration, skills, and education. Other responses highlighted the social and wellbeing aspect of economic growth and the need to address issues within communities. An issue for many was that any new approach would create an additional layer of complexity that resulted in duplication and bureaucracy.

‘Early wins’ were mentioned a few times and it was highlighted that councils already knew the disparities and strengths in their own areas and were best placed to advise on these. The better utilisation of resources was advised, and that available funding should not be over-diluted, but should be targeted to the needs and priorities of any given area.

Evaluation

There is a need for DfE to be in this space – driving and leading or facilitating and co-ordinating as appropriate. The rising tide is not raising all boats. DfE should state its intent to take concrete action with measurable targets that are backed with adequate resource to deliver. It is important there is no added bureaucracy and duplication is minimised and eradicated where practical.

Action

An intervention at sub-regional level that links local level plans with all Departmental strategies is required. Opportunities to link with other NICS departments should be sought. The focus should be to lessen disparities.

Question 1 (b): If the Department has a role to play at a sub-regional level, is there is a role at council area? What could this be given the role and remit of local government? Should DfE be involved only sub-regionally initially leaving the local space to councils, business, academia, and communities?

This open, narrative question invited the respondent to comment on what the role of DfE should be, and what responsibility it should have and what this might look like.

Out of the 33 written responses that were supportive (81% of the total received), some suggested single roles and some suggested multiple roles. In total, 94 inputs were provided to this question across the written responses. Some are intrinsically linked (although presented here in Figure 5 separately for transparency). The proposed roles most favoured suggest that DfE needs to take the strategic lead not only within its remit, but in terms of influencing other NICS departments to develop a holistic approach to sub-regional and local level issues.

However, this should be done while working within existing structures – so as not create additional bureaucracy – with established partners, recognising their excellence, respecting their remit, and co-producing solutions while providing appropriate support. Only one response advised that expectations needed managing, although this was much more pronounced in meetings albeit with acknowledgement that the Department and partners needed to be more effective in communicating positive progress.

Role	Explanation		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Coordination • Influence • Alignment of design & delivery 	Across NICS, align policies and interventions. Influence direction. Provide consistency of approach	26	27%
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Partnership & collaboration • Recognition 	Bring others to the table and create / use networks. Utilise structures and expertise already available. Recognise established expertise	25	27%
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strategic Approach • Intervention development 	Clear strategic direction and clarity across DfE. Create policy framework (flexibly) & programme delivery that avoids duplication	17	18%
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Accountability • Leadership 	Assume responsibility for the overall sub-regional level policy / create centralised oversight	11	12%
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Engagement & resource • Supporter 	Participate with partners at a local level especially council. Provide resources. Support role and remit of local government	11	12%
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Evidence / expertise provider • Trusted information source 	Provide evidence and share expertise for local decision makers where there are gaps	3	3%
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Manage expectations 	Be clear with stakeholders of what can be achieved by providing a strong framework and coherent message	1	1%
Total		94	100%

Figure 5: Full range of responses

Summary of responses and comments

Again, the importance of a whole of government approach was emphasised, to avoid working in isolation and to optimise resources. The opportunity to align with the work of other departments as an approach to economic inequality was emphasised multiple times. The suggestion was made that the creation of ‘champions’ within departments and organisations could speed up developments. Most stated that any success for *place* interventions could only come from a whole of government approach to remove silos and optimise resources.

Importance was placed on a collaborative partnership approach. It was suggested the value of this could lead to more effective harnessing of local organisations and their experience. Co-design was proposed as a methodology to develop local level initiatives and to set priorities. A great deal of work has already been done by partners and DfE could use this to build a baseline of economic and social performance.

In terms of the role of DfE, several views were put forward and while there was little clear consensus, most suggestions were interlinked - a multi-modal approach could facilitate and deliver on the majority of ‘asks’. A high-level strategic role to bring together local level and NICS stakeholders was repeatedly mentioned as was the need to influence other NICS departments. Bringing together the NICS through a policy framework would support local council delivery and assist in improving the local investment proposition. The Programme for Government outcomes-based approach model could provide for stakeholders to contribute to shared objectives.

A few responses noted that DfE should only have an input to sub-regional policy and that collaborative agreement should be required from other organisations. A local bottom-up approach was considered ideal by many.

The use of existing mechanisms, e.g. Community Planning Partnerships and Labour Market Partnerships was suggested by many to avoid the risk of introducing another level of bureaucracy, reporting structures or duplication.

Some acknowledged that [Place10X](#) could not solve every problem and spreading the effort too thinly could make the concept hard to grasp, appear unachievable, and lessen confidence. If the promise of inter-departmental working is not realised the inefficiencies in delivery would limit the future potential of any *place*-based strategy to achieve meaningful and sustainable economic impact.

Evaluation

DfE is being welcomed into this space and there is optimism (tinged with realism) that this could be the start of a generational change in sub-regional economic development. The Department is being asked to respect and support the local level remit while acting as an interlocutor, challenger, support, facilitator, and leader at sub-regional level in a manner that drives an Executive wide coherent response.

Action

DfE should work with local representatives to develop their priorities and asks within a strategic framework that other partners and NICS departments can link to. It should do this within existing structures, it should ensure outcomes and targets are co-produced, and it should be transparent about limitations to manage expectation.

Question 2: What geographic areas should Place10X cover?

This open, narrative question asked respondents to give their thoughts on what sub-regional geographies would look like.

There were a range of written responses to this question; some had single suggestions while others had multiple ideas. In total 89 inputs to this question were identified and broken down into broad solutions.

Boundary		
Case by Case, Flexible, Tailored. Unique to need, locally focused	18	20%
Multiple approaches needed	16	18%
Cross border	12	13%
Council area	10	11%
City & Growth Deals	6	9%
Economic Corridors / themes for economic benefits that cross boundaries	5	5%
Existing sub regional partnerships	4	5%
Unclear/No response	4	5%
NI Wide	3	3%
Urban vs Rural	3	3%
Not City & Growth Deals – these were not created based on evidence of disparities	2	2%
Defined by metrics	2	2%
By sector or skills	2	2%
Shared Economic Characteristics or Need	1	1%
Ward	1	1%
TOTAL	89	100

Figure 6: Boundary Suggestions

Views have been clustered (unclear and NI wide were discounted at this stage). This still delivers a range of competing views, competing approaches, and competing outcomes.

Boundary		
Custom as required	40	50%
Ward, Council or City and Growth Deal	21	27%
Cross border	12	15%
Urban vs Rural	3	4%
Defined by metrics, sector, or skills	3	4%
TOTAL	80	100

Figure 7: Boundary Suggestions - Thematic Cluster

Summary of responses and comments

This question summarises how the diversity of opinions towards *place* and sub-regions contributes to the current fractured approach. There is no overall agreement of geographic areas, and some are suggesting a differing metric to be used for creating areas.

Many (18) suggested that flexible approaches based on a case-by-case basis should be adopted due to unique challenges in each area whereas a further 16 inputs believed that multiple approaches are required depending on need and desired outcome. The use of economic themes/corridors (5) or shared economic need (1) was grouped with these responses given the broad range and lack of current measurability.

Approximately 27% of inputs (21) suggested current geographic boundaries / partnerships such as ward level (1), council area (10), existing sub-regional partnerships, and City and Growth Deals (6) would be appropriate. Arguments that council areas are a natural base for this work already were made, highlighting that partnerships and experience exist already, and that this was a pragmatic solution. A similar argument was made for the City and Growth Deals that have established relationships and consortia to develop large capital projects that drive both local and regional success.

However, some noted that Deals are at differing stages, and some were not created based on evidence of need but of political expediency. This may not address spatial disparities and within Deal areas there can be variations in less populated and less urban areas which in turn creates imbalanced competition with cities. Some who favoured urban versus rural design (3) echoed this point. The disconnect that some rural communities felt was exacerbated by transport and infrastructure weaknesses, but also in a lack of opportunities that more urban areas could avail of.

Cross border networks were highlighted as ‘vital’ to success by many, and 12 respondents suggested these were appropriate for a sub-regional focus. Intrinsic to growth in border areas was inter-jurisdictional working, some noting any strategy was not credible without it, and that it would be a step backwards to not consider economic development that stopped at the border.

It was highlighted across a range of responses that a locality’s sense of *place* should be underwritten in to any way forward.

A small number of respondents suggested that using sectors or other metrics such as skills, innovation, productivity etc. should define the sub-regions. This is something the current [Approach to 10X Technologies and Clusters](#)¹⁰ consultation is considering with stakeholders which will in turn inform the sub-regional approach.

Evaluation

That a flexible approach customised to the preference of the stakeholder was the preferred option of 50% of respondents is unsurprising, but it is a way forward that is practically difficult if not impossible to deliver in practice. Once one gets their need met it means others will not, perhaps even within the same geographic area, causing conflict and a loss of faith in the direction of travel. Further, it creates a space for competing priorities and initiatives which runs contrary to the findings in questions 1(a) and 1(b) above. There may be room for flexibility to elevate sub-regional working once the foundations are laid and it should remain a priority for DfE to build in where possible.

It is also clear that flexibility can be built in to any solution, but it cannot be endlessly elastic and at some stage demarcation will be required. Indeed so long as there are targets and measurable objectives that can be mapped across the sub-regional areas, custom areas for projects or initiatives could be accommodated over time as they could be more targeted on specific need.

Multiple approaches by sector or technology could also be reflected in this way and the consultation noted above must be considered in any final sub-regional boundary definition. Within the Department, multiple areas are already used when considering sub-regions – those for the regional colleges differ to those of the City and Growth Deals for example – and that is replicated across ‘arm’s-length’ bodies and other NICS departments. Indeed, if taken further and sub-regional boundaries were determined by metrics such as productivity or green growth or inclusion, there could be a plethora of overlapping boundaries which may confuse matters when trying to integrate the interventions with other work streams, NICS departments or council priorities.

10 [Department for the Economy website - Approach to 10x Technologies and Clusters Consultation](#)

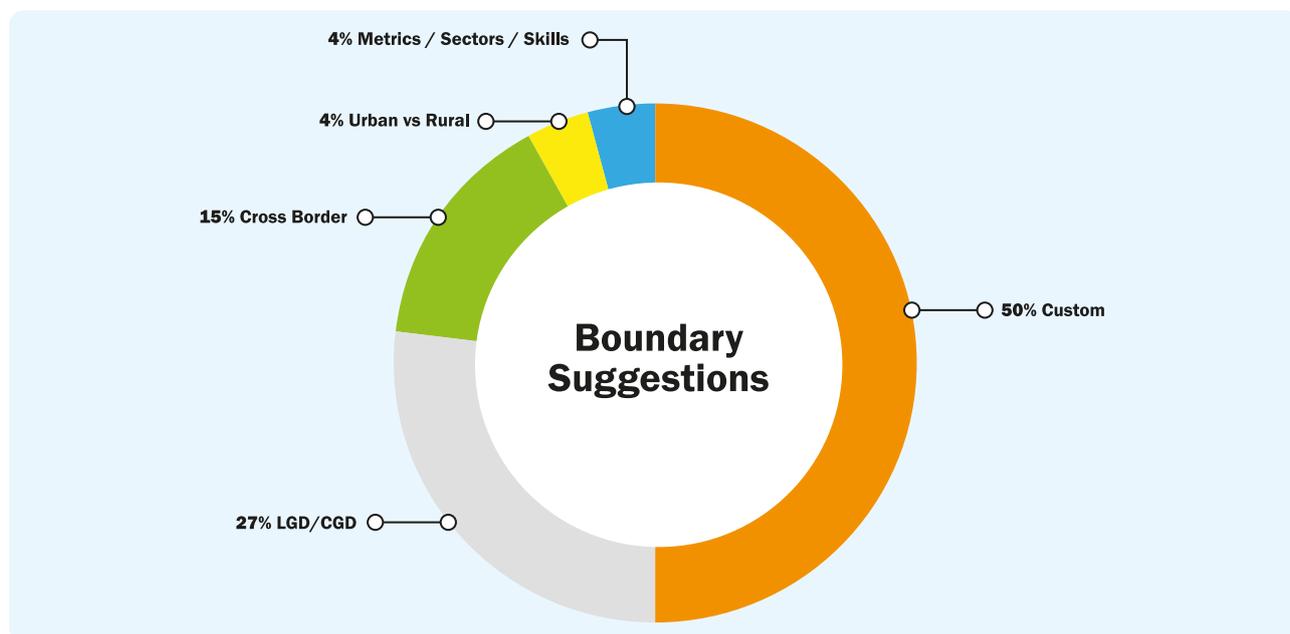


Figure 8: Boundary Suggestions

As such while there is a clear message that flexibility needs to be built in to any DfE strategic approach, it can only be within broader parameters that can deliver for all, and this means that the strategic approach must have measurable targets. To do that there needs to be a base agreed to provide that analytical capability. Also, as there is a need to link the local economic development plans to the 10X Delivery Plan, the building blocks for this must be pragmatic to interlink.

To this end, data points can be assessed at local government level and aggregated upwards for regional measurement and disaggregated to ward level as required. Pragmatism alone suggests that local government division is the building block of any sub-regional conglomeration which does rule out any option that uses overlapping segmentation, initially at least. Keeping sub-regional at the 11 council areas cannot work as it could impose upon the statutory remit of councils and Community Planning Partnerships, essentially trying to replace the local remit.

City and Growth Deals (4 areas) reflect this as does the [Invest NI Regional Office](#)¹¹ network (5 areas), whereas as a comparator, the Irish Government considers [3 regions](#)¹² with regional assemblies with powers for economic development appropriate (although [IDA Ireland uses 8 regions](#)¹³ and [Enterprise Ireland, 9](#)¹⁴). While there is justifiable concern over arbitrary boundaries holding back flexible solutions, once established there is no reason that work cannot occur across such boundaries that will support objectives in multiple council areas. The distortive effects of larger urban centres, academic centres, and infrastructure will all need considered.

11 [Invest NI website - About Us Where We Are](#)

12 [Government of Ireland website - Building Ireland's Future](#)

13 [IDA Ireland website - Annual Report and Accounts 2021](#)

14 [Department of Enterprise Trade and Investment website - Regional Enterprise Plans](#)

The cross-border element is also critical to consider, and any solution must include it, whether due to neighbouring geography, aligned priorities and objectives, or simply due to the unique situation in Northern Ireland following EU Exit agreements. However, given departmental remits, jurisdictional, and constitutional issues, these may need to be used as complementary to any DfE derived approach, utilised by those in sub-regional areas to enhance the overall outcome sought. Regardless, this should be encouraged and where possible integrated.

There is therefore a need for an interim boundary design as a foundation. Within this, council level economic plans and community partnerships can help develop the local product, the local ask, and DfE and partners should link into those focusing on how to support councils and tackle disparities that previous macro-economic strategic approaches have increased. Elevating these issues to the sub-regional level should then link to 10X delivery plans while creating a base to work from in creating outcomes to achieve. *Place*-based interventions can be developed within the DfE remit and with NICS partners. This needs to be evidence informed and only finalised when partners agree on a preferred option. That said, an interim measure is necessary to allow some development of metrics, to drive DfE and Invest NI sub-regional interventions, and to give this work agency and momentum.

The [Invest NI Action Plan](#)¹⁵ published in October 2023 contains a section on Sub-Regional and *Place* which made a number of recommended solutions including a review of the INI Regional Office network and the formulation of a sub-regional economic plan with measurable targets, neatly dovetailing with the objectives of [Place10X](#). Given this, and the feeling in some responses that City and Growth Deal areas may not be the best for a sub-regional approach, using the INI Regional Office network structure as an interim boundary baseline could be a reasonable starting point until a preferred option can be co-produced with stakeholders in early 2024.

15 [Department for the Economy website - Independent Review of Invest Northern Ireland Action Plan](#)



Figure 9: Invest NI Regional Office Structure

Action

There needs to be an exercise to develop local economic propositions in partnership with councils and to identify disparities that need addressed. Aggregating this to a sub-regional plan with measurable targets will support the development of more dynamic local economic ecosystems and deliver 10X Delivery Plan objectives. Using the Invest NI Regional Office structure as an interim measure to define boundaries will allow the development of policy initiatives and delivery programmes now that can tackle local and sub-regional disparities and inequalities.

Question 3: What is expected of delivery partners?

This open, narrative question asked the respondent to think about existing services and responsibilities currently being delivered.

There were 37 responses to this question and the following is taken from the narrative provided by stakeholders. These were summarised into two sections – what delivery partners can do and what DfE can do.

Delivery partners can...

Acknowledge the role of cross border partners and seek pathways with DfE to ensure cross border collaboration
Clarify roles and responsibilities between ALB’s, councils and stakeholders
Collaborate with DfE and other partners to ensure consistency and share relevant data to produce research and analysis to understand the underlying causes of disparities
Commit to lessen sub-regional disparity
Co-produce research to understand the current sub-regional economic context
Define the subregional approach
Demonstrate effective networks and facilitate knowledge exchange between partners
Direct focused support
Engage and assist DfE
Maximise the impact of successful programmes such by taking a long-term consistent <i>place-</i> based approach to investment planning
Partner to ensure that future interventions are designed and developed holistically
Provide information on local priorities and needs through work already completed; and highlight unique insights into specific issues and challenges
Work Together to provide solutions

Figure 10: Delivery Partners Role

DfE can...

Accelerate the infrastructure and co-operation required to create an effective <i>place</i> -based approach
Align DfE macro policy and NICS departments output/outcome metrics more closely with existing stakeholder strategies and operations including community planning
Be aware that delivery partners will vary, and the approach will need to be flexible in approach
Bring together fragmented <i>place</i> -based supports under one framework, creating an overarching vision that all partners can feed into and agree upon
Clarify the responsibilities at council level and delivery partners. Large overlap and duplication with no consistent approach needs reform
Collaborate between delivery partners and stakeholders to ensure unique, deliverable, and tailored solutions made up of relevant key stakeholders to an area
Commit to and provide a mechanism for, collaboration, continuous improvement and sharing of best practice
Deliver <i>place</i> related co-designed interventions through delivery partners aimed at need and priorities, enhancing a partnership approach to local economic development
Design customised sub regional geographies which can include cross border
Enhance understanding of regional disparities at a local level, sharing relevant data on economic indicators, such as employment rates, income levels, and investment patterns, to identify disparities and conduct research and analysis to understand the underlying causes of regional differences
Focus on locality and be flexible so that each area can focus on its own needs and priorities.
Fund and allocate resources to support pilots or bespoke initiatives
Move departments beyond “having regard to” commitments, to compelling them to delivery
Provide outcomes, being clear on objectives to be achieved with a strong policy commitment to respond to disparities and inequality for NI areas
Mitigate against complicated and burdensome administration, as well as duplication
Recognise effective delivery partners interventions. Identify and map out all relevant interventions to ensure synergies and highlight any gaps

Figure 11: DfE Role

Summary of responses and comments

A whole of government approach was highlighted as the optimal way forward for maximum effect. Changing ways of thinking within government to being delivery focused rather than having commitments rarely realised, will be more successful at addressing disparities and making a difference. It was raised that any new sub-regional approach would have limited impact if there was not a more holistic delivery to economic development with integration across departments and stakeholders. Another area of concern was also the lack of alignment / differences between the functions carried out by ALB’s and those conducted by councils. Investment in higher and further education institutions was suggested by that sector as necessary to ensure that they can support the development of actions, policies, and interventions.

In terms of DfE remit, many advocated that a more targeted, localised approach (i.e. *place*-based thinking) was needed to ensure that the Department will involve councils from the policy development stage, to co-design and right through to delivery. This would include engaging more with councils to identify and align existing and new work, building on insights and expertise completed by councils as key drivers of local economic development. It was suggested that there was a role for ALBs to work more closely with councils at a sub-regional to provide a consistent approach to economic development – and for statutory remits to require outputs. This includes aligning with local approaches such as Community Planning and Labour Market Partnerships where multiple partners work together for a common goal.

Councils highlighted that they are familiar with meeting sub-regional objectives, but there is a lack of flexibility in how resources can be deployed to support delivery. There is a need for a mechanism that will delegate delivery responsibility to the appropriate level/partner. There were questions about how change could be achieved, and the difficulty of working with different partners who have different focuses was raised often.

There needs to be clarity of purpose in terms of a sub-regional approach as organisational definitions and proposed routes to achieve beneficial outcomes varied across stakeholders. There was some confusion already over sub-regional messages with no consistency of approach. Some thought that DfE and the NICS have too many delivery partners and suggested that a review be completed to identify duplication and gaps in service. It was suggested that the only possibility of success is to get all government departments, councils, government agencies, NGOs, businesses, and the public bought in. Key delivery stakeholders must work together, targeting outputs and outcomes, underpinned by citizen-centric design. Some inputs suggested getting partners to sign up to an agreement.

Building a baseline of expectations around economic priorities and needs was considered insufficient by many as there also needs to be a focus on social and environmental priorities. A strong baseline is essential as new interventions need to be informed by analysis of market need and demand to provide insights which could help inform DfE of specific opportunities and/or challenges within local areas. Several responses stated the proposed approach aligns closely with community planning.

As before, the risk of duplication and added bureaucracy was flagged up. The Department needs to be conscious of this when creating initiatives to address specific problems at the local level. Within this work / activity, there may be opportunities for pilot programmes / proof of concept activity that demonstrate potential for scalability and help build an evidence base to support wide adoption. Any new strategy cannot be just another layer on top of community planning and local economic development plans – it cannot be another tier of activity with no guarantee of adding value and where measurement and evaluation not the outcome would be the focus. It needs to add additionality and complementarity.

Evaluation

Commonality of purpose was the clear message – all partners working together to deliver, and this requires DfE to go beyond its own remit. Building on existing structures is important and partners need to step up to make those more effective first and foremost. A whole of government approach is required for *place*, but that does not mean DfE cannot lessen disparity within its remit. DfE must not invent levels of bureaucracy to divert partners and an exercise to analyse need and coverage gaps would be beneficial.

Action

Involving partners in the identification of economic priorities and developing local propositions is required. Community Planning Partnerships should be evaluated as an appropriate structure to integrate the holistic approach.

Question 4: What interventions could occur?

This question asked the respondent to think about existing services and if something else was needed.

Many examples beyond this [Call for Evidence](#) were provided which will be useful as interventions are developed, but for analysis purposes here only a selection of those with a place dimension have been included below. Analysis is taken from 38 responses with 56 aggregated suggestions. Many suggestions were provided for new and future interventions while underlining concerns about duplicating existing initiatives.

Existing Interventions

Community Planning Partnerships	A process by which organisations who provide public services, business, voluntary groups, and local communities work together in each council area. Aims to improve the connection between all the tiers of government and wider society; and identifies long-term priorities for improving the social, economic, and environmental well-being of districts and the people who live there
City and Growth Deals	Deals are a custom package of funding negotiated between government and local authorities, aimed at helping to harness additional investment, create new jobs and accelerate inclusive economic growth. The NI Executive and the UK government has committed £1.2bn capital funding over the next 15 years to four Northern Ireland City and Growth Deals
NI Local Policy Innovation Partnership	Ulster University receives UKRI funding for one of ten Local Policy Innovation Partnership schemes, which will build cross sector partnerships that aim to address local / community-based challenges. This approach treats NI as a <i>place</i> / sub-region with the UK
Cross border education pathways	Collaboration on skills and education progression pathways between NI and ROI are being developed
Labour Market Partnerships	Department for Communities (DfC) led project to better address issues with jobs and training by combining resources and delivering a joined-up and flexible approach to employability support. Cross-departmental and multi-agency approach, each of the 11 councils have set up local LMPs
Cluster Development	A policy priority within DfE's 10X Economy vision. These are likely to focus on certain areas – currently under consultation
Skills Academies	These link regional colleges and local businesses

Existing Interventions

Cross border collaboration	Examples include the North West Strategic Growth Partnership established by the North South Ministerial Council that brings together senior government officials from all departments in NI and ROI to meet with Donegal County Council and Derry City and Strabane District Council; or the Dublin Belfast Economic Corridor which brings together 8 councils (4 in NI, 4 in ROI) with academic partners to work to attract business investment
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Figure 12: Existing Interventions

Future Interventions

Tailored intervention strategies by region	Develop tailored intervention strategies for each sub-regional area, considering the identified priorities, strengths, and weaknesses. Identify potential interventions and align with broader economic regional policies and objectives. Any new interventions should be carefully designed to ensure that current strengths are maintained
Research to understand the economic landscape	Comprehensive analysis of the economic landscape considering factors such as regional disparities, industry strengths, and key economic challenges. Identify sub-regional areas based on relevant economic indicators such as employment rates, GDP, industry clusters, and infrastructure. Gather insights and perspectives from stakeholders to understand their specific needs, aspirations, and priorities for economic development within their respective sub-regional areas
Interventions required to span government at all levels	This would include legislative changes, NICS departmental NI Executive Programme for Government, fiscal incentives and disincentives, provision of appropriate infrastructure that supports the overarching vision, and education and information to ensure that the public is fully bought into both the vision and process
Joint integrated economics and skills planning	Development and delivery of specific interventions to address labour market shortages and bottlenecks with integrated skills planning to ensure maximum benefit from City and Growth Deals investment and skills priorities for each region. <i>Place</i> based linkages between education and industry has significant potential given local industries developing in local areas and skills gaps
Investment zones	Would catalyse momentum around City Deals
Visitor experience development plans	Created and agreed between Tourism NI and each council for their area to create consistent approach and form one brand – could be linked to City and Growth Deals at sub-regional level
DfE led focus on rural economic prosperity and regeneration	Economic focus needed on rural needs and policy created to address this

Future Interventions

Sub-regional targets for interventions and support	For job creation, job quality productivity, employment, economic inactivity and more – targets essential
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Figure 13: Future Interventions

Priority Interventions

Creation of a DfE led economic place focused framework	To ensure policy and interventions encourage the widest possible involvement of local stakeholders providing an inclusive approach and utilising expertise. Interventions should be responsive, flexible, and agile
Invest NI led interventions	More visibility and key services to be available in regions. This would demonstrate commitment. Programmes should be evidence informed to determine spend
Education	Expansion and development of FE / HE provision, student numbers and courses in areas outside Belfast. Need to focus on how to reverse brain drain and create opportunities to retain and attract the most skilled and create new employment pathways for all
Skills pipeline	Linked to regional industry and business to address historically low levels of productivity and innovation – apprenticeships and entrepreneurship key factors
Co-ordinated strategic approach and action plan for job creation, FDI and innovation	By region to address regional imbalance, disparity of opportunity and high levels of economic inactivity and unemployment
Job creation and sustainability scoping for Green Economy	By region to have equal access to opportunities
Broadband access and resilience	Support and interventions to effectively address deficits throughout the region, with a particular focus on rural areas

Figure 14: Priority Interventions

Concerns around interventions were also highlighted

Clarity – approach outline lacks clarity and substance
Collaboratively produced delivery plan – Risks duplicating effort with no guarantee of impact if stakeholders not involved at each stage having a say in the prioritisation of interventions. Important to build on the sub-regional strategies and delivery plans currently in existence to ensure that interventions are flexible. A tailored delivery model and approach aligned to the needs and targets of the sub regional geography required
Consistent and shared approach – needed across NICS departments in areas such as regeneration and infrastructure to complement economic development; there is an intrinsic link between connectivity and GVA
Delivery – Currently multi layers and approaches in how councils work with government departments. Provision / support landscape is confusing with too many bodies involved offering similar support
Evidence – Datasets and a true understanding of the profile of both local and subregions will be key to unlocking the real and actual potential of each to achieve the ambitions of 10X and to understand what can or needs to be done. It is essential that interventions are mapped against relevant metrics. Prior to identification of interventions, there is an understanding of the evidence base so that interventions can be shaped around evidenced need. A <i>place</i> -based dataset could be created

Figure 15: Intervention Concerns

Summary of responses and comments

There is agreement that interventions should focus on tackling inequality and disadvantage, but no overall agreement on how this should be done. Several responses around existing and new interventions were put forward and the importance of using existing local expertise and structures was highlighted as in previous questions. Collaboration with local experts and information-sharing of relevant datasets was identified as vital to comprehensively understand sub-regional disparities, devise effective strategies, and implement targeted interventions to promote inclusive economic growth.

In several responses, the Department was criticised and seen to be missing an understanding of what needs to be done at a local level to tackle disparities, and to align objectives and interventions. The [Call for Evidence](#) was also deemed to lack clarity and substance. There is a need for learning from other places and approaches should be underpinned by a consideration of successful interventions that have been undertaken elsewhere.

While DfE must provide the leadership and direction in terms of policy and interventions to ensure that existing economic development infrastructure is cost effectively maintained, developed and future proofed, there is a need for DfE to bring in other NICS departments. It was suggested that [Place10X](#) will fail if it does not take local needs into account. It was argued that both central and local government already have a wide range of policy levers and interventions at their disposal. These could be used more effectively to target interventions in areas of greatest need while prioritising other interventions that would deliver the best outcomes for people and subregional.

Community Planning was highlighted as the best structure for DfE to become involved, but not simply having a seat at the table – the Department needs to take a more proactive role. However, a concern raised around this route was that it has struggled to fully engage all the partners needed to make a real difference. A re-energised partnership model is required.

Cross-border collaboration, and its economic benefits, should be an important dimension of targeted interventions, as was the deeper integration of City & Growth Deals and a relook at economic development in rural areas.

A move from ‘hard’ economic metrics was suggested with a person-centred approach that links wellbeing aspects to economic progress including greater strategic coordination between government departments and the different agencies providing services in areas of high economic inequality and deprivation.

Evaluation

Many respondents echoed inputs in previous questions although there was more focus on citizen-centric design and the need for wellbeing and deprivation metrics being included. Building on local expertise and integrating NICS departmental strategies was reaffirmed here, with a feeling that adequate levers existed but just needed to be used more effectively. Community Planning Partnerships were highlighted as a useful structure to use but only if they are revitalised, with statutory partners needing to put in greater resources to deliver evidence-based targets. A focused dataset is essential to inform sub-regional targets.

Action

Community Planning Partnerships and linkages to Place10X should be considered with the network and DfC. Metrics beyond those used for 10X could be assessed for linking into wider wellbeing and deprivation strategies across the NICS and councils.

Question 5: What are the indicators of success?

This open, narrative question asked respondents to look at the need for robust evidence and to put forward indicators and metrics to measure success at a sub-regional level.

Many responses provided indicators and metrics which are contained in the indicator table below (Figure 18). Some analysed the example metrics in the [Call](#) and some responses answered the question as ‘what does success look like?’. Many used the illustrative charts within the [Call](#) as evidence of an approach rather than evidence highlighting disparities. There was much discussion around this with many supporting the examples used and others arguing against. Nearly all responses provided details of metrics that should be covered and / or what they thought success looked like.

Dataset design suggestions

Align 10x and subregional indicators	10X metrics and indicators of success will inform those considered to measure Place10X . However, there is a disconnect and the pathways are unclear as to how 10X aspirations can be delivered and translated at a sub-regional and local level. The Place10X dataset must be bespoke going further than 10X to meet the unique challenges, but both should be interlinked.
Alignment	There is a need for the Department to align metrics with local strategies and the outcomes in the Programme for Government. This offers an excellent opportunity to bring all the disparate policies of various departments together and integrate delivery. All parties involved need to jointly agree the appropriate dataset and how it can be collected and used
Appropriate Metrics	Datasets and a true understanding of the profile of both local and subregions are key. Statistics and data need to be provided at a disaggregated level to allow a true picture
Benchmarking	There has been significant data gathering at a local level. DfE should use this data to generate benchmarks and identify comparative areas of challenge and opportunity across the region.
Businesses	Success should focus on impacts relevant to SME employment, development of new enterprises, growth of existing enterprises, development of the skills base, higher levels of integration between education and business. Outcomes must be about creating and sustaining more and better jobs, local prosperity, improved local health and ultimately, social inclusion through enterprise. Success would be more engagement and evidence of growth in terms of numbers of organisation and impact, an increasingly engaged sector, evidence of opportunities for new start-ups
Cross border collaboration	Collaboration is also delivered in a cross-border and/or all-island context. Measuring this effect is important
Data Sharing	Working on co-created <i>place</i> datasets will offer an opportunity for data sharing between departments and organisations

Dataset design suggestions

Deprivation and inclusion	There is no discussion on the Call of deprivation, educational underachievement, lack of government investment, legacy issues, community cohesion, government apprenticeships in local areas, levels of unemployment, quality of life, wellbeing and equality, access to services such as high-speed broadband, take up of FE and third level education, health, underrepresented groups such as women, those with disability who can / would like to enter employment, or income inequalities etc. These issues need to be measured to demonstrate success in regeneration and economic development and to deliver a person-centric approach
Timeliness	While this will not be done quickly, there are interventions already happening that can provide ‘quick wins’ to inspire confidence that this approach will be followed through and is worthwhile

Figure 16: Dataset design suggestions

Indicators of success

Benchmarking excellence	Strong policy commitment to respond to disparities, against comparable regions in the UK and internationally
Coherence	The alignment of NICS strategies and interventions. One DfE approach to a region rather than fractured silos
Community building	Improvements in places by lessening societal segregation, building positive good relations, and improving economic prospects for those left behind. Recognise social value.
Co-production and collaboration	Partnership working in local areas, sub-regions, and cross-border / all-island. Division and competition to be minimised
Highly skilled population	Improving skills and access to skills development to ensure everyone can reach their potential. Early access to 'future' skills to allow take up of innovation opportunities
Identification of underlying factors	Mapping strengths and weaknesses to allow tailored solutions to reduce disparities
Invest NI visibility	Relocation to, and significant resource increase in INI Regional Offices. Greater visibility of senior staff and more promotion of assistance available
Person-centric	Exploration of education, housing, mental health and improving employability alongside larger economic drivers. 'More than' economy that measures well-being and happiness
Regeneration	Increases in innovation, productivity, R&D etc. would also drive visible benefits in regenerating town centres and rural areas.
SME / MB prioritisation	A greater focus on developing the local economy rather than focus on larger export businesses. Improve Small and Medium Enterprise and Micro-Businesses skills base – greater integration of local education provision and business
Sub-regional identity and pride	Clear and agreed identity that has stakeholder buy in with strong connections to academia, business, and community groups. Local prosperity, improved local health, richer social inclusion and civic pride about a <i>place</i> where future generations want and love to live, work, build enterprise, socialise, and raise families in

Figure 17: Indicators of success

Respondents suggested the following indicators and metrics to be taken into consideration:

These have been grouped together under headings for readability

By Super Output Area (SOA):	Economic	Education & Skills	Industry	R&D and Innovation	Labour Market	Population	Societal
Health deprivation	Increased productivity through net increased GVA	Level of numeracy achieved at end of KS1, KS2 and KS3	High growth business per 10,000 population	Business Enterprise and Research Development spend	Better paid jobs – median wage growth	Breakdown of population and make up	House price to earnings affordability ratio
Pupil attendance	Productivity at a macro-NI and local level	Level of literacy achieved at end of KS1, KS2 and KS3	Industry % share of total NI employment	Innovation investment and activity	Growth in employment		Quality of life and opportunity
Free School Meal eligibility	Increased visitor numbers	Proportion of school leavers reaching positive destinations (i.e. education, employment or training)	Increase in sectoral employment aligned to key growth sectors	Breakdown of Innovation	Retention of skilled labour		Inequality
Income deprivation	Mapping strengths	Growth of the skills pipeline through increased third-level education provision	Stimulation of entrepreneurial activity in particular graduate entrepreneurship	Innovation Driven Enterprises (IDEs)	Breakdown of the labour market		Wellbeing
Special Educational Needs (SEN)	Mapping weaknesses	Breakdown of skills and qualifications	Increase in new business starts and improved rates of survival (beyond 3 and 5 years)		Economic inactivity		Deprivation
	FDI levels	Educational underachievement	Level of high growth businesses		Unemployment		Health inequality

By Super Output Area (SOA):	Economic	Education & Skills	Industry	R&D and Innovation	Labour Market	Population	Societal
GCSE attainment (5+ GCSEs (A*-C) including equivalents including English and maths)	Gross National Income (GNI)	Uptake of FE and third level education	“Business Dynamism” which reflects the rate at which new firms enter and existing firms leave the at the sub regional level to measure innovation and productivity growth.		Business access to labour		Income inequality
The impact which improved collaboration has had on families / communities	Balance of Trade	Apprenticeships	Scaling business growth through technology		Job access		Legacy issues
Levels of high growth businesses	Inflation rate	Skills deficits	Breakdown of industry		Median salary		Community cohesion
		Levels of student numbers	Entrepreneurship and business growth		Employment rate		Infrastructure
		Levels of graduate numbers	Local Total Entrepreneurship Activity (TEA)		Labour market deficits		Town regeneration
		Skills base for SMEs	Job Activity		Levels of ‘brain drain’		Social inclusion
			Market connectivity				Local civic pride
			Target industries				Transport
			Entrepreneurship needs to reflect the need for delivery and engagement at all levels of education				Local prosperity
							Income equality
							Life expectancy
							Growth of disposable income

Figure 18: Suggested indicators and metrics

Summary of responses and comments

There was broad agreement with the illustrative examples set out in the [Call](#). It was highlighted that a significant amount of data had already been gathered through different interventions and that DfE should use this instead of duplicating effort. However, while this had been collected there was a need for better understanding of how it led to a way forward. It was suggested that an exercise could be done collectively with all parties agreeing to [Place10X](#) metrics. This would provide opportunities for data sharing and accelerate intervention design.

Caution was provided on the illustrative examples as several are survey based, which raises potential quality issues when applied sub-regionally. It was suggested that wherever possible, chosen indicators should be based on administrative data. The aggregation of data could mask the need for interventions at a council or ward level. It was also highlighted that whatever approach was taken, responsibilities for measurement of impacts and progress should be clearly defined and understood by the responsible bodies involved.

Indicators of success had similarities with the suggested dataset design, although much more focus was given to building wellbeing in communities as both a consequence of economic performance but also as an enabler. Similar issues to earlier questions were apparent once again – alignment, collaboration, improved skill base – but there was a greater focus here on developing micro-business and small and medium enterprises. Recognising social value and community wealth building through citizen-centric design was well supported.

Evaluation

The common thread across all responses was that while there is a need to align with 10X metrics, there is also a need to align with other metrics currently being used at local level or elsewhere in the NICS. Many respondents observed that economic indicators could not be used in isolation but that societal, wellbeing, and environmental metrics should be included. Not all of these are within the DfE remit and consideration as to how these can play a role will be a major exercise.

Action

An exercise needs undertaken with internal analytics teams to decide a final dataset and which metrics will be the indicators of success. There is a need to establish the level of disparity that can be lessened within each metric by DfE. Work with partners will need done in 24/25 to ensure alignment of their metrics to the dataset.

Question 6: Is the Department’s view of place and use of Place10X correct?

This closed question asked respondents for their thoughts around the Departments view and definition of place.

This analysis is based on the 30 responses that stated a preference. There were 6 unclear responses and 5 nil responses. 93% of respondents were satisfied that it is correct – albeit some of those urging caution of its ambition. Only 7% did not agree.

Response	Number	Percentage
Yes/Welcome	19	63%
Yes, with Caution	5	17%
Satisfactory	4	13%
No – do not agree	2	7%
TOTAL	30	100%

Figure 19: Response to definition and use of place and Place10X

Some broad themes also emerged around the definition of *place* and Place10X.

Accountability	DfE must accept that all policy and programmes have a <i>place</i> dimension and take responsibility to ensuring partners delivery programmes consider sub-regional interventions
Benchmarking	Learn from cities / places that have already done this and changed their economic outlook
Clarity and integration	Be clear what the definition means in terms of remit, and ensure it is used consistently throughout the organisation
Definition alignment	It can have multiple meanings so defining it within the remit is useful. There needs to be a clear link with other NICS definitions and concepts of what <i>place</i> is
Inequality	Addressing inequality, disadvantage, and lessening disparities must be part of any definition
Prosperity	Suggestion that economic ‘growth’ should be replaced with economic ‘prosperity’ to suggest the wider social and environmental benefits

Figure 20: Definition Themes

Summary of responses and comments

Most stakeholders welcomed or found the definitions satisfactory although some caveated their agreement given the risk that **Place10X** was aiming too wide. Associated principles embedded within the definition could function as a test to ensure that actions would be sufficiently *place* focused.

There was some disagreement on the geographic scope and whether *place* is about local or sub-regional or even regional dependent on circumstance. Several responses warned against setting a rigid formula of local / sub-regional / regional.

Many responses welcomed the definitions as an important step forward in Departmental engagement. They welcome the recognition that the concept of *place* is wider than the DfE remit and that the approach acknowledges that areas have different strengths, opportunities, and challenges. They suggested this would require a varied approach at times and the need to collaborate and focus on different ways to meet local and sub-regional challenges and priorities.

Evaluation

There is an acceptance of the definition to a sufficient degree to continue while developing the Sub-Regional Economic Plan and associated consultation.

Internally there has been some consideration of the nuanced definition differences between sub-regional and *place*. While some interventions can be sub-regional, they may not exist to tackle a disparity or inequality and by the proposed definition, therefore not *place*-based. They may simply be a macro-economic response happening within a sub-region. That said, many organisations use the terms interchangeably and synonymously and it raised little misunderstanding. One distinction could be that *place* is a subset of sub-regional strategy and that everything within the DfE remit could be classed as sub-regional and anything that requires interdepartmental response would be *place*-based. Alternatively, anything at local level could be considered *place*-based.

The introduction of appropriate metrics and the analysis of sub-regional disparities that need reduced will supply the evidence base for required interventions that in essence make all sub-regional initiatives *place*-based and this issue somewhat moot. Trying to define these separately may just increase confusion with little practical benefit.

Developing internal **Place10X** policy and programme principles can ensure the concept is embedded across DfE and its partners in a manner that focuses on the outcome rather than the process. Aligning this with the DfC People and Places toolkit would ensure consistency with other NICS partners too. If sub-regional interventions are *place*-based by design, then there is no need for further definition.

Action

The definitions of *place* and **Place10X** in the Call for Evidence should be embedded across DfE and partner organisations through awareness raising and embedding principles in policy and programme design.