



Inspire - Build - Sustain

Strategic Plan 2021 - 2026





RESPECT

Our club supports Young Umpires



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Forward

On behalf of Ulster Hockey and all concerned, I would sincerely thank all contributors to the Ulster Hockey Strategic Plan 2021-26.

Dr Paul Donnelly and David Barrett have produced an excellent and professional piece of thought-provoking research and a logical plan derived to ensure Ulster Hockey's strategic direction is on the right track. This team of experienced Consultants are well respected in Northern Ireland sports governance, business and management networks and their evidence-based approach to planning and decision making will stand Ulster Hockey in good stead over the next 5 years.

The Strategic Plan Project has been a challenging task against a background of Covid-19 pandemic impacts and everyone has played their part in a clear collaborative spirit to make it happen. I offer sincere thanks to individual players/coaches/umpires/volunteers, clubs, youth panel members, staff, Board members and key stakeholders for their views and input over many hours of Zoom and face-to-face meetings.

A clear innovative pathway to financial sustainability has been formulated, with alignment to the relevant strategies in the sector.

I assure you that Ulster Hockey shall still be in 'listening mode' as we all progress along this growth journey and endeavor to enhance our communication with all the local Hockey Family. Any strategic plan needs to be monitored and reviewed periodically and the new Board shall commit to this important action with an innovative methodology. The new Committee structure and the many volunteers have a vital operational role to meet the plan's stretched targets.

Please join with us in realising our strategic priorities through this Plan for the future of Ulster Hockey:

- Growing our Game and Strengthening our Communities - Participation & Development.

- Inspiring our Future Winners and Supporting our Current Winners - Pathways & Coaching Development.
- Leading our Sport - Finance & Governance.
- Ethical Sport - Inclusion, Welfare, Ethics, and Fair Play.
- Raising our Profile - Communications, PR & Marketing.

Thanks also to Marc Scott, Executive Manager for liaison with Paul and David and meeting Board's expectation on the delivery timeline for this important document.

As Ulster Hockey celebrates 125th years of organised hockey in the Province, it is evident that we have a rich and successful past; the planning process has identified our baselines which indicate our strengths in the present; and the plan developed through the process ensures that we are planning a sustainable future for the sport, building a strong foundation for the next 125 years

Billy Pollock, Chairperson Ulster Hockey



Executive Summary

This Ulster Hockey Strategic Plan 2021-26 has been developed following extensive research and consultation with a range of stakeholders from across the hockey community. This plan presents a clearly defined future direction for

the organisation which puts people, clubs and communities at the centre of everything that Ulster Hockey will do over the next six years. The infographic on page 6 highlights key facts/figures outlining the current position for hockey in Ulster.



Where Are We Now?

Clubs



Players

12,000

total participant members at affiliated clubs



7

Tokyo Olympians



35

junior age grade players engaged in talent development programmes

128

in Ulster talent squads

270

in U15 Talent Development Programme

Teams



296

junior teams



209

senior teams

Coaches

432

accredited coaches



Umpires

146

accredited umpires



Schools

78

senior schools supported to deliver hockey

208

primary schools supported to deliver hockey



Blitzes

50

school-based Youth Blitzes planned and delivered



Social Media



8,000

Twitter followers



7,000

Facebook followers



4,300

Instagram followers



Where do we intend to be?

With a renewed sense of purpose, the plan will aim to impact positively on people, clubs & schools and communities across Ulster. The plan identifies six integrated strategic outcomes, objectives and targets to be realised over the next five years, all of which are designed to support and develop clubs, schools, competitions, volunteers, umpires, coaches and officials so that Ulster Hockey family are given the opportunity to engage, enjoy and excel.

The tables below highlight these strategic outcomes, their intended effects, and the way in which they will be measured.

Ulster Hockey aims to impact and enrich people's lives, by enhancing experiences and improving performance through promoting high standards of delivery and engagement across the sport. By putting clubs first, will sustain and improve opportunities for participants at all levels to thrive.

Outcome 1: Financial Sustainability

We Will:

Focus on an investment model that relies less on public sector funding, more commercial sponsorships that add value to our membership and is self-sustaining.

Resulting in:

A strong and financially independent organisation.

Measured by:

Diversification of income streams and financial reserves.

Outcome 2: Safe & Sustainable Clubs

We Will:

Support and develop clubs to be safe, sustainable and welcoming, be the best they can be and create an effective environment for their members, coaches and volunteers.

Resulting in:

Effective, sustainable and connected hockey clubs with growing membership levels year on year.

Measured by:

More players, more teams, more umpires and more volunteers.

Outcome 3: Participation Growth & Diversification

We Will:

Maximise hockey opportunities for children, young people and adults in communities across the Province and enhance their experience of the sport.

Resulting in:

Increased recruitment and improved retention of players within Ulster Hockey's clubs, compared with the 2019 baseline.

Measured by:

New players actively engaged and involved in the sport year-on-year.

Where do we intend to be?

Outcome 4: Effective Athlete-centred & Connected Talent Pathway

We Will:

Work in collaboration with Hockey Ireland and other key stakeholders to create an inclusive athlete-centred pathway which connects talented young players to opportunities to achieve their full potential.

Resulting in:

The identification of a representative pool of talented players from Ulster's hockey clubs.

Measured by:

Increased numbers of players identified as having the potential to progress from a larger number of clubs.

Outcome 5: Recognised & Valued Brand

We Will:

Communicate and advocate our brand values with professionalism and passion to build and foster positive relationships both within and outside the sport.

Resulting in:

Improved collaboration leading to more investment and wider community involvement in the sport.

Measured by:

Increased levels of engagement in the sport, more positive media coverage at local, regional and national level and commercial interest.

Outcome 6: Responsive & Effective Leadership

We Will:

Continue to improve how we govern hockey in Ulster, leading by example, working in partnership with all interested parties and responding to the needs and aspirations of our members.

Resulting in:

An organisation that is trusted, works to the highest professional standards and is valued by all key stakeholders, including funders, clubs and members.

Measured by:

Continuous monitoring of satisfaction through stakeholder feedback and membership consultation.

About Us

Ulster Hockey is one of four affiliated branches that together form Hockey Ireland. Hockey Ireland, as the overall governing body for the sport across the island, is the principal body responsible for the development of hockey at all levels. In its relationship with Hockey Ireland, Ulster Hockey has responsibility for the administration, development, and delivery of hockey within Ulster. Following the amalgamation of the Ulster Branch of the then Irish Hockey Association (UBIHA) and the Ulster Women's Hockey Union (UWHU) the Ulster Hockey Union (UHU) was formed in May 2009.

Ulster Hockey currently supports the efforts of 27 men's and 50 women's clubs (Men & Women) and 12,000 members and players across the Province. The headquarters of Ulster Hockey is in Belfast. Ulster Hockey is looking to embark on the development of a new long-term strategy to commence in the autumn 2021, targeting an ambitious growth in the sport in terms of participation, success, profile, and financial sustainability. To support the delivery of future strategies and to ensure best practice permeates throughout the organisation, Ulster Hockey has recently completed a legal restructure to form Ulster Hockey Limited with a new Board and Committee structure.

Ulster Hockey works with a range of public bodies to deliver on its key strategic objectives. Core to this work is providing support and services to clubs, members and players which strengthens the ongoing development and delivery of sport within Ulster.

This Strategic Plan outlines our aspirations for hockey in Ulster and explains how we will work towards achieving our vision over the next five years. Despite the challenges of the past year due to Covid-19, this plan sets out how we intend to build a more sustainable and exciting future for our sport, motivating and providing more opportunities for more people to get and stay involved. We want hockey to grow in participation numbers, improve its infrastructure, succeed at the high performance level and be recognised for demonstrating excellence in governance.

The delivery of this plan will also require increased investment in both financial resources and people. If we are not able to obtain increased investment during the term of the plan we will need to review and potentially revise our targets, re-assess the priority of our key programmes and explore new ways to deliver.



Vision



“Increase participation, support excellence and develop a sustainable game for the Ulster Hockey family”

Through this plan we want to inspire more people to get involved in hockey and more people to stay involved in all aspects of the game.

Mission

Inspire involvement

Build capacity

Sustain clubs

Ulster Hockey is responsible for the promotion and development of lifelong participation, delivering a quality experience and supporting clubs that allow both individuals and teams to enjoy, engage and excel at all levels in the sport.

Values

Inclusion, which means we are respectful.

Integrity, which means we are responsible.

Inspiration, which means we lead.

Teamwork, which means we are collaborative.

Openness, which means we are engaging.

Unity, which means we are Pioneering.

We have set ourselves a challenging and stretching vision. As momentum builds it will be increasingly important to draw upon values that build unity and purpose. With our people as our richest asset, our values will set the standard for how we work together in delivering the vision.

Our values will help the organisation grow as a hockey family and will set us apart. Bringing our plan to fruition through respectful engagement also ensures that we stay true to our founding values as we build our future vision together.

We Identified the values that best capture the spirit and culture of Ulster Hockey following in-depth consultation with our Board and Staff. Six broad areas emerged as important and distinctive to Ulster Hockey.

As we deliver our Strategic Plan, Ulster Hockey will continue to evolve and grow. We will regularly review our values, vision, and mission to ensure they reflect the organisation we want to be.

Planning & Consultation Process

Ulster Hockey is the primary 'owner' of this Strategic Plan and as such, will oversee courses of action and again importantly, the allocation of resources to contribute to and further enhance the role of the organisation in the Province. Ulster Hockey will also perform a range of functions from enabling others to achieve these objectives, to collaborating with them to do so or, as appropriate, shaping and leading their implementation. Within the Province, strategic planning takes place at several levels.

This Strategic Plan is designed to establish outcomes, objectives and related actions for the development of Hockey in Ulster over the period 2021 and 2026. It aims to ensure sustainability amongst all clubs and provide targeted growth in those priority areas identified in the plan. The emphasis on creating sustainable clubs and offering focused support for key initiatives over the lifetime of this plan emerged from a detailed engagement and consultation process, led by independent facilitators, Dr Paul Donnelly (Ulster University) and David Barrett (Sheffield Hallam University).

Over the last six months, Ulster Hockey consulted extensively with Board members, staff, volunteers and players - young and old - to identify the key issues and challenges facing the organisation and priorities that need to be addressed in the short, medium, and longer-term. Throughout the process, it was clear that stakeholders' concerns were centred on sustaining the expectations associated with modern club activities, including administration, coaching, umpiring and, increasingly, statutory obligations.

These issues were underpinned by a desire to respond to the increasing demands placed on existing volunteers, which were particularly acute for clubs with comparatively few members. There was also a sense that any strategic plan first needed to establish a sustainable framework within which all clubs could progress and which would offer additional targeted interventions to address the key issues and challenges for Ulster Hockey and its clubs across the Province. These were very real concerns for the supporters

of Hockey in Ulster even before the events of early 2020, but the severity of the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic and its aftermath will shape the activities of Ulster Hockey for some time to come and assuredly for the timescale of this plan.

Fundamentally, the measure of success of any Strategic Plan is in assessing:

- What work took place because of it?
- Who benefited from the focus it provides? and
- How do 'we' know it is having the effect for which it was intended?

As many organisations, albeit for now largely in the public sector, transition towards an 'Outcome Based Accountability' model from their planning processes it is likely that in the future, Ulster Hockey will do so, too. In the meantime an increased awareness of an outcome based 'approach' is promoted within this document, one in which our planned actions are shaped by our intention to create meaningful change for the positive benefit of target groups; and for the wellbeing of Ulster Hockey and the community in which it resides.

Development of this Plan

The development of this Strategic Plan commenced in January 2021 with a an internal review of achievements against the organisation's Strategic Plan (2017-21), which was also supported by the review of Sport NI's funding programmes. This process enabled Ulster Hockey to critically assess current operations against the targets and objectives outlined in that plan and identify areas requiring further progress.

This was a largely successful plan with the majority of funded objectives achieved as evidenced in monitoring returns to Sport NI. Although, there is a need to set more realistic outcomes, monitor all objectives and fully consider resource implications within this new Strategic Plan.

Planning & Consultation Process

Development of this Plan continued...

As Ulster Hockey moves more in the direction of long-term strategic horizons for its planning activities, there is a sense that whilst the outgoing plan, with its strapline of 'Inspire an Active Hockey Family' had much to commend it, some of its key objectives remained to be fully addressed, often through circumstances beyond the organisation's control. Instead, responding to a clear desire on the part of Ulster Hockey stakeholders to offer greater consistency with strategy emerging at national level and recognising the clear shared views arising from the consultation period, consideration was given to the publication of a new strategy that drew influence from the plan recently launched by Hockey Ireland, 'Change the Game 2020–2024'.

Consultation with Stakeholders

The outcomes, objectives and metrics emerging from this Strategic Plan were informed by a comprehensive consultation process which explored contemporary issues in hockey in considerable depth.

Eleven (online) one-to-one meetings were held with key stakeholders during February and March. These meetings ensured that stakeholders had the opportunity to inform the discussion not only by identifying the issues that were pertinent to them and to their clubs, but also by explaining how they had arrived at the current position.

Their feedback on a wide range of topics helped to shape the strategy that will lead the direction of the sport in Ulster over the next five years.

Meetings with members of the Board of Ulster Hockey, with its staff and with members of the Youth Panel took the form of a focus group discussion on a number of themes such as the (1) notable achievements and successes, (2) key challenges facing the sport, and (3) future priorities for action. Feedback provided confirmation of the macro themes that had been identified in early discussions with the Ulster Hockey board members and staff. These include:

1. A stable, safe and sustainable future for the organisation and its affiliated clubs (Financial Sustainability);
2. Building capacity to deliver hockey (Coach, Umpire and Workforce Development);
3. Increasing levels of engagement and involvement in hockey (Participation);
4. Inspiring future generations (Talent Development);
5. Effective leadership, stakeholder engagement and partnership working (Collaboration); and
6. A visible and recognisable 'brand' (Communications and Advocacy).



Planning & Consultation Process

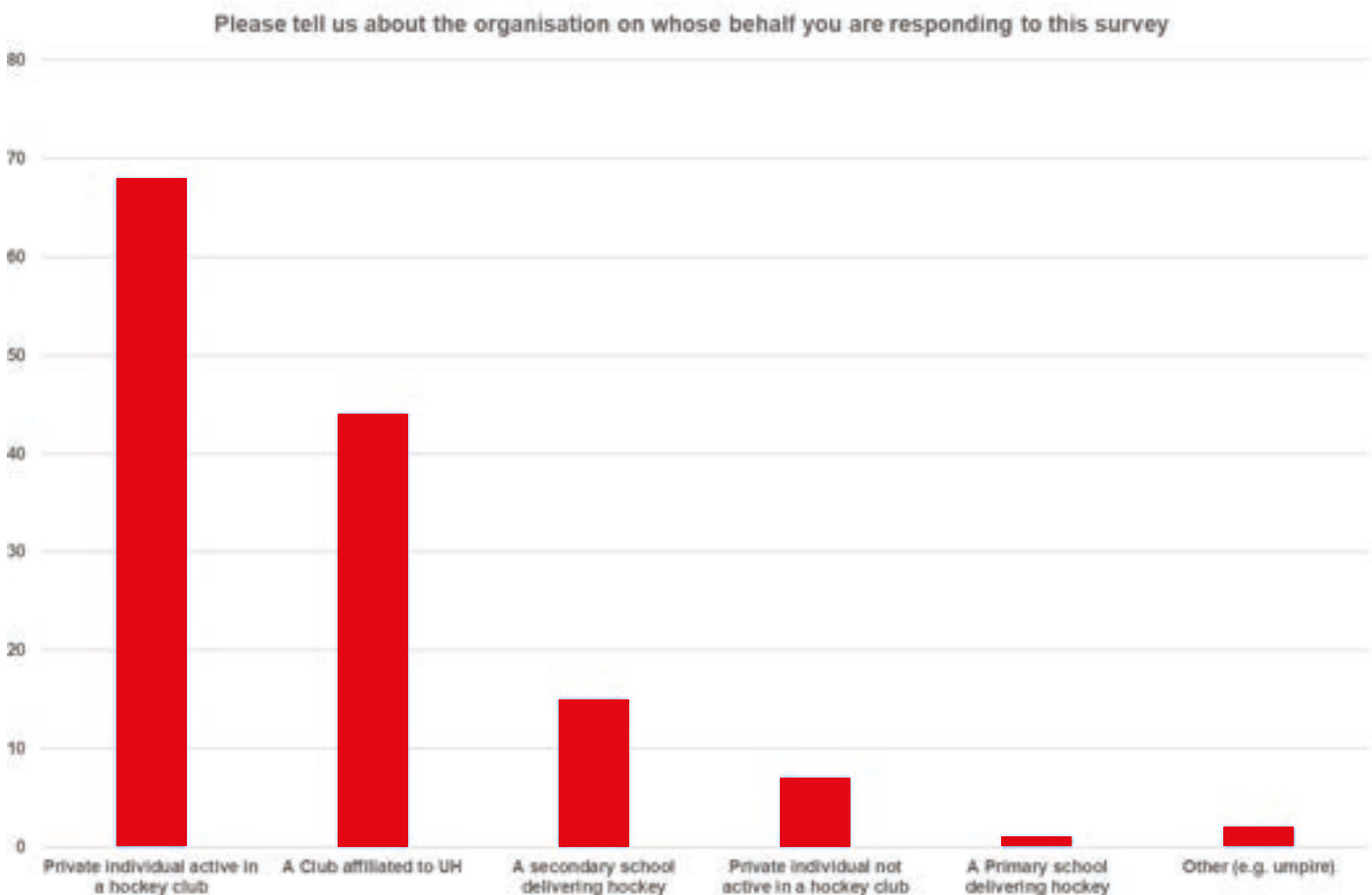
An online survey was also carried out to provide additional opportunities for stakeholders to provide feedback and engage in the consultation process. The consultation of interested parties took place in March/April 2021, generating 138 responses. Figure 1 shows that just under half were from private individuals who are active in an affiliated hockey club, with a further 32% of responses on behalf of clubs.

The survey produced significant clarity in relation to recent successes and challenges for Ulster Hockey. More than half of the respondents (51%) felt that youth hockey was a considerable success story, confirming the positive views of staff and board members. In fact, this was the dominant view within the survey, although there was also support for 'competition' (18%) and 'inter-provincial representation' (17%). It is notable that youth hockey is considered to be such a strength,

since it offers hope that growth in senior hockey can be achieved if players can be retained.

Conversely, respondents to the survey identified a broad range of challenges, not least of which was the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic (21%). While the lockdown restrictions on participation are temporary, there are fears that the effects may be long lasting. Nevertheless, the most significant challenges were thought to be funding (28%), the structure of the senior leagues (27%), and trends in participation (21%). Again, these issues reflect those raised by consultees who took part in one-to-one interviews and focus groups, suggesting that the views of staff, board members and others with direct and indirect top-down responsibility for planning and delivering hockey are in tune with volunteers and administrators working at the 'coal face' in Ulster Hockey's clubs.

Figure 1 - Representation in the Survey



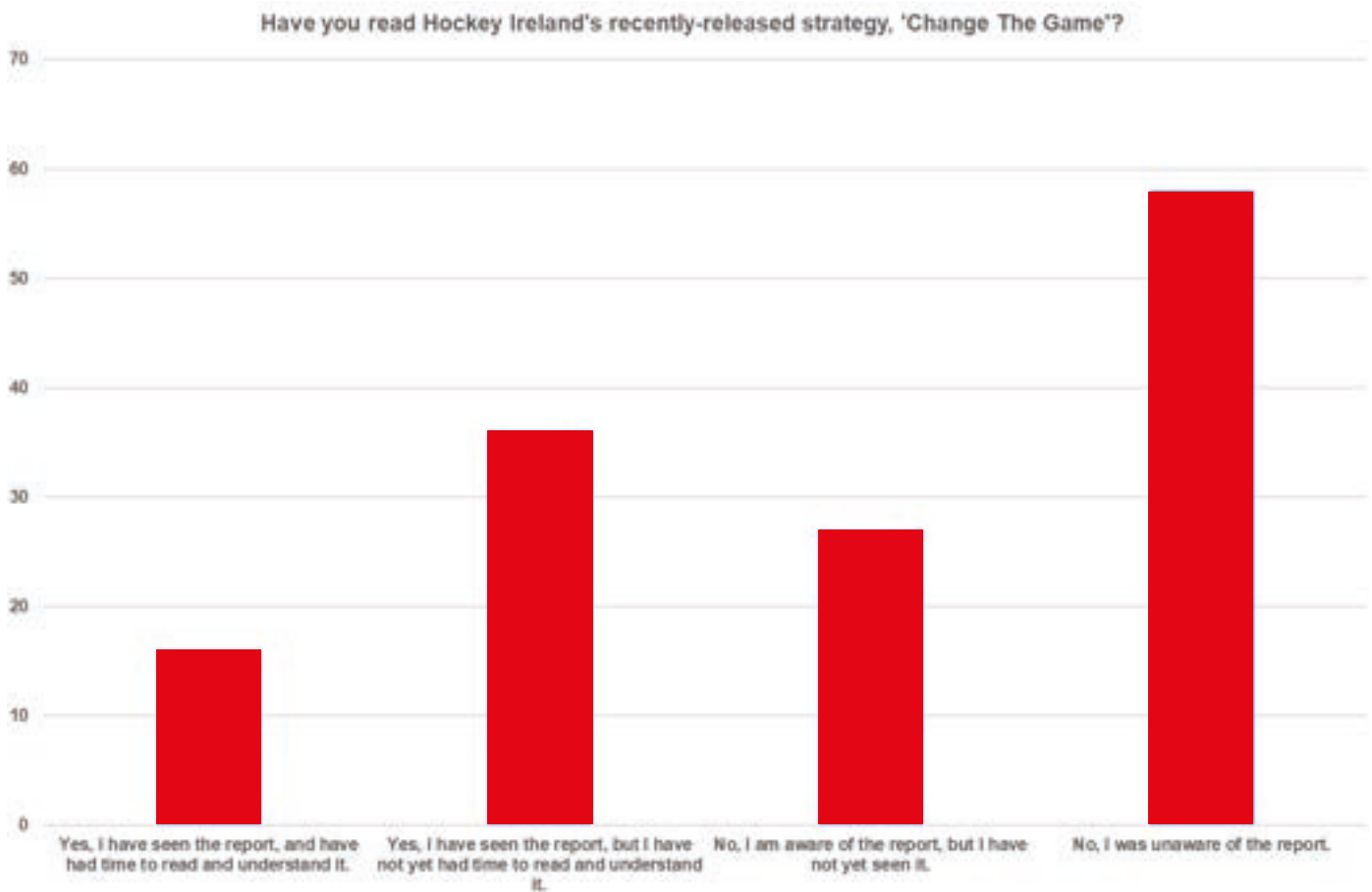
Planning & Consultation Process

Figure 2 shows that only a small proportion (12%) of respondents have digested Hockey Ireland's recently released strategy 'Change the Game', while 42% were unaware that the document had been published.

This underlines the fact that few people who are engaged in hockey in Ulster have more than a superficial understanding of the broader All-Island strategic context in which Ulster Hockey operates.

Survey participants were asked to rate a series of elements of delivery according to importance and satisfaction, with response being scored on a scale from 1 to 5 in each case. Figure 3 (on page 18) details the outcome of this gap analysis.

Figure 2 - Awareness of Hockey Ireland Strategy



Planning & Consultation Process

Senior competitions were ranked as the most important facet of hockey in Ulster, but satisfaction was ranked 'only' eighth. Similarly, Umpire and Coach Education courses were ranked second

and third respectively in terms of importance, but ninth and tenth in terms of satisfaction. This suggests that respondents would prioritise improvements to these aspects.

Figure 3 - Gap Analysis of Survey Respondents



In contrast, Youth Blitzes were had the highest levels of satisfaction, but were ranked fourth in terms of importance, suggesting that they are outperforming expectations. Other, off-pitch programmes (Working with Parents, Good Relations) are seen as being a much lower priority.

emerging document. Their comments and input were extremely valuable and helped to ensure this final document is the product of collaboration across Ulster, just as its successful implementation needs to be.

Later in the process, during May 2021, a document outlining the proposed outcomes, key objectives of the new plan, the specific actions emerging from these and a series of related 'progress indicators' was drafted. This was subsequently shared at a full meeting of the Ulster Hockey Board, with time allotted for feedback on the

Planning & Consultation Process

Club Membership Data

Both Hockey Ireland and Ulster Hockey supplied club-location and membership data for 2020-21, broken down by age-group and gender.

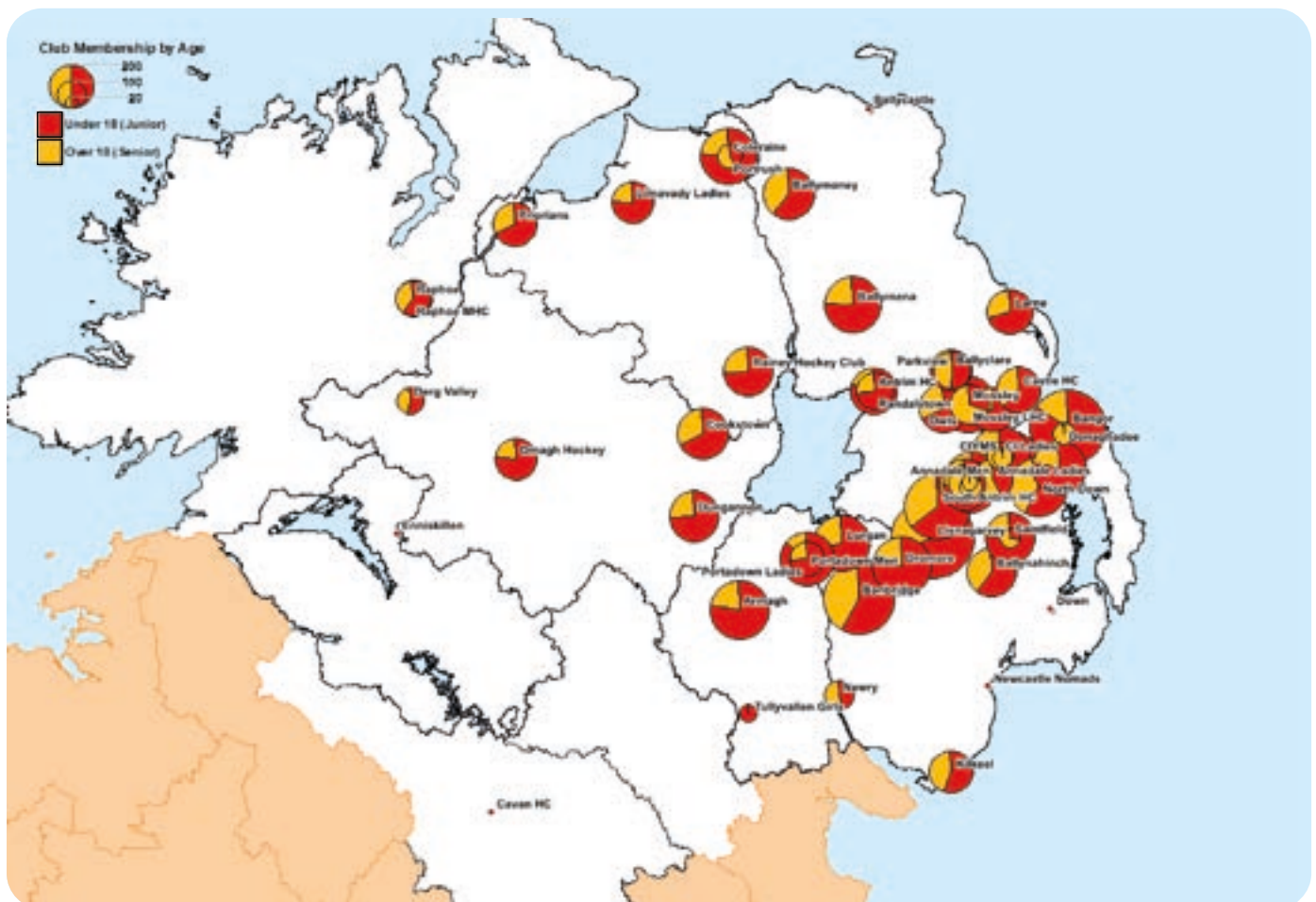
The results are shown in Figure 4 and Figure 5 (below). Overall, clubs are generally clustered around the Belfast area, particularly South Belfast (where the largest clubs are located), South Antrim and the suburban/commuter settlements outside the city.

The remaining clubs are much more disparate geographically, emphasising the difficulty in generating and retaining interest in participation when journey times to fixtures are likely to be high. There is also evidence of several clubs which have folded in recent years most of which are located towards the periphery of Ulster Hockey's territory.

The largest clubs generally have much larger youth sections (with the possible exception of North Down). Clubs in more rural areas tend to be smaller, with a relatively lower proportion of junior members. Analysis of membership by gender reveals a flaw in Hockey Ireland's data which highlights the importance of collating and maintaining accurate affiliation information.

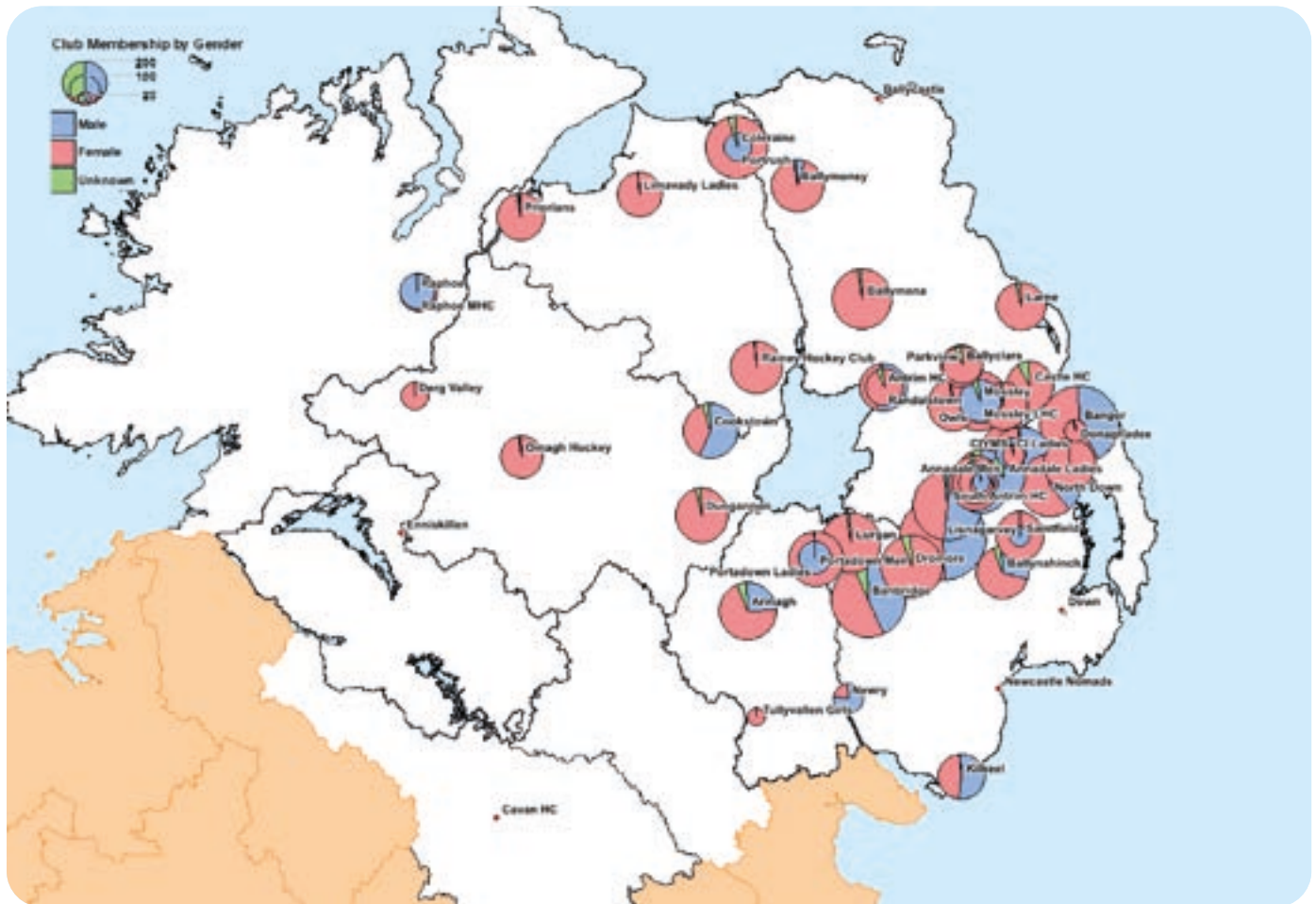
Planning for future development of the sport is dependent on an accurate picture of the current situation, and the introduction of a new online system for affiliation should enhance Ulster Hockey's ability to monitor changes and trends in club growth.

Figure 4 - Ulster Hockey Affiliated Clubs by Age



Planning & Consultation Process

Figure 5 - Ulster Hockey Affiliated Clubs by Gender



Ulster Hockey's 2020 Club Audit Findings

To support its primary theme of providing sustainable structures and support for clubs, Ulster Hockey worked in collaboration with Sport NI to undertake a detailed audit of clubs across the Province. Twenty clubs in Ulster made a full response to the detailed survey, and thus Ulster Hockey were presented with the most comprehensive survey of our clubs ever undertaken. The lead officer for the research within Sport NI, provided Ulster Hockey with a 'headline' findings report in May 2020. The findings of the audit were central to the final stages of the planning process.

SPLISS 'Lite' Assessment

Following a request from Sport NI, Hockey Ireland in 2019-20 agreed to a light-touch external audit

of it's Elite Development System under the model known as SPLISS (Sport Policy Factors Leading to International Sporting Success). While Ulster does not compete on the international stage there was nevertheless considerable value in benchmarking the organisation against international standards, and many positives emerged from the exercise, particularly in relation to participation, governance, talent identification and player support. The insight and learning points generated by 'SPLISS Lite' will be of significant benefit in the delivery of our strategic outcomes over the next five years.

Strategic Fit

In developing our Strategic Plan we have spent considerable time 'horizon scanning' to not only establish the strategic direction for our sport

Planning & Consultation Process

but to embrace and contribute to the strategic approaches of many government departments and agencies responsible for sport, physical activity and health.

As a voluntary body we are acutely aware of the need to take a broader view of sports development

and demonstrate the value and contribution that hockey can make within the wider community. This will also make us less reliant on the traditional core funding streams and diversify our income opportunities making us more financially resilient to changes and sustainable in the long term. The key strategies considered are summarised below.

Hockey Ireland Strategy 2021-24 – Change the Game:

this new strategy sets out the vision and purpose of the National Governing Body with an emphasis on growth and success to become “one of the ‘big 4’ sports in Ireland”. It is essential that our strategy contributes to this vision and equally reflects the specific circumstances and needs of our members in Ulster. Hockey Ireland’s ‘Strategic Goals’ are as follows:

1. Secure the Future;
2. Grow the Hockey Community;
3. Win on the World Stage;
4. Lead our Sport;
5. Engages Positively with Stakeholder’s; and
6. Build the Hockey Ireland Brand.

Our new Strategy will reflect some of these priorities and ensure that Ulster Hockey continues to develop an effective sporting system that allows our teams and players to reach their highest potential and win on the world stage.

Draft Programme for Government:

The Northern Ireland Executive recently launched a consultation on the new draft Programme for Government (PfG) Outcomes Framework. The Programme for Government focuses on achieving wellbeing across our society and the draft Framework sets out nine ambitious Outcomes aimed at making a real and positive difference to people’s lives. The key not only to the development of the new Outcomes-based PfG, but also its implementation and delivery, is government’s collaboration and teamwork with key stakeholders and partners. Our new Strategic Plan has the potential to make a significant and direct contribution to three of nine draft Outcomes, specifically:

1. Our children and young people have the best start in life;
2. We all enjoy long, healthy, active, lives; and
3. Everyone can reach their potential.

Draft Sport NI Corporate Plan 2020-25:

this new Corporate Plan sets out two outcomes:

1. People adopting and sustaining participation in sport and recreation; and
2. Northern Ireland athletes among the best in the world.

In the development of our ‘Strategic Framework’, it is Outcome 2 that will most inform the sports development actions and targets, although as noted above, it is imperative that we demonstrate the contribution of our sport to Outcome 2. The Corporate Plan further sets out three approaches that Sport NI will follow in delivering the plan: 1. We will influence strategically and build partnerships; 2. We will deliver expertise; and 3. We will make outcome focused investments. These three approaches will be reflected throughout our plan with a meaningful commitment to making ourselves more accountable for the delivery of outcomes (and adoption of an ‘Outcome Based Accountability’ approach).

Planning & Consultation Process

Department for Communities – A New Sport and Physical Activity Strategy for Northern Ireland (Consultation Document, February 2021):

This pre-consultation research and engagement has informed the following proposed Vision for the new Sport Strategy: 'Lifelong involvement in sport and physical activity leads to an active, healthy, resilient and inclusive society which recognises and values both participation and excellence.' It is proposed that the final Strategy will be delivered under 6 Key Themes which reflect the key messages:

1. Recovery from the impact of the pandemic on sport and physical activity;
2. Promoting participation, inclusion, and community engagement;
3. Promoting excellence in sport;
4. The importance of partnership and integration;
5. Providing inclusive and shared spaces and places; and
6. Promoting the benefits of sport and physical activity.

These 6 Key Themes will be underpinned by 3 Cross-Cutting Principles:

1. Developing inclusive, shared communities;
2. Developing capacity and governance in sport and physical activity; and
3. Developing national and international linkages.

Our plans and programmes will continue to adapt to the broader priorities set out within the Programme for Government, to demonstrate the high value and positive impact our sport can have on these broader agendas and in particular on health and inclusion opportunities, as we recover from the Covid-19 pandemic.

Our Response

Ulster Hockey is confident that this new Strategic Plan can drive the work of the organisation over the next five-year period and galvanise the support and involvement of all stakeholders as we work together to achieve the vision, outcomes and objectives contained within the new Plan. However, it is worth noting, the Strategic Plan is not a prescriptive document in that it does not seek to lay out in detail precise actions to be undertaken in every situation. Rather it sets the 'direction of travel' and establishes a broad position on several key priorities. The implementation of the strategy, that is the allocation of work plans to the relevant staff and committees, should be undertaken by a strategy implementation committee, which also has an important function in monitoring the rolling out of the strategy and offering assessment at the mid-point in its lifespan, which will be Autumn 2023.

We now need to focus on implementation and achieving the targets within the Plan whilst ensuring that our organisation is more resilient to lead the recovery of our sport after the Covid-19 pandemic. In recognition of this, the first year of this plan (2021-22) is focused on recovery and ongoing review, with strategic growth to follow in the remaining four years (2022-26). We will continue to work closely with our key stakeholders and partners to ensure that we have the right people, volunteers and executives, in place to drive and deliver the priorities outlined in the remainder of this document.

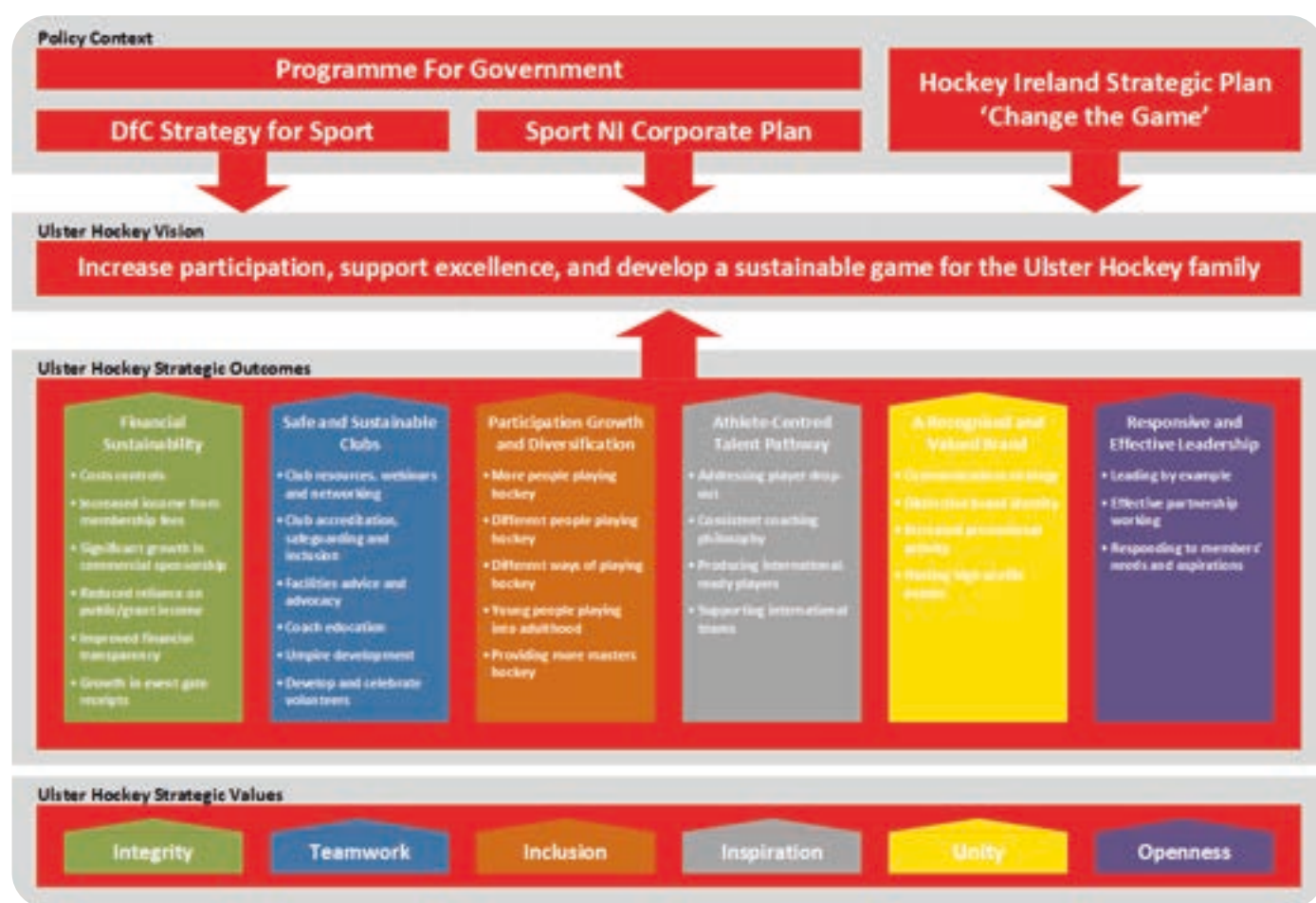


Strategic Framework, Outcomes And Objectives

From the research conducted and the meaningful consultation and stakeholder engagement that took place, valuable feedback was generated that helped formulate the strategic framework (illustrated in Figure 6 below) that has been used

to underpin this Plan. The Framework applies six integrated strategic outcomes delivered through a range of activities designed to bring about transformational change within Ulster Hockey over the life cycle of the Plan.

Figure 6 - Strategic Framework



All of our planned activities will focus on the six strategic outcomes which are clearly in our area of responsibility to influence and improve. The delivery of these strategic outcomes will require the development of annual Operational Plans that are resourced effectively to ensure progress is being measured and reported on a regular basis. A detailed description of the six strategic

outcomes and related activities, objectives and measures of success is presented in the following tables. The seven Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) are highlighted.

Strategic Framework, Outcomes And Objectives

OUTCOME 1: FINANCIAL SUSTAINABILITY				
We will:	Resulting in:	Measured by:	Baseline	Target
<i>Focus on a sustainable investment model that relies less on public funding, and more on commercial sponsorships that add value to our membership.</i>	<i>A strong and financially independent organisation.</i>	<i>Diversification of income streams and financial reserves.</i>	2021	Change
ACTIVITY	OBJECTIVE	MEASURES OF SUCCESS		
Cost controls	Continued management of the available budget on principles of financial prudence to maintain strict control of costs.	Cost to income ratio	98%	-5%
	Identify savings, economies of scale and value for money through competitive procurement.	Reduced back office costs	£74,000	-10%
		Level of financial reserves	£173,000	+10%
Membership fees	In consultation with clubs, keep membership levies under review during recovery from the Covid-19 pandemic	Membership income	£210,000	+14%
	Achieve growth in membership income by supporting an increase in participation leading to an increase in club membership affiliations.	Membership income per member	£17.50	+10%
	Establish a membership scheme to which individual supporters of UH can subscribe in support of the organisation's strategic objectives.	New 'non-club' members	0	+500
Commercial sponsorship	Establish a business forum for corporate and private benefactors in support of UH's strategic objectives.	Commercial income as percentage of total income	1%	+9%
	Identify a lead commercial partner and sponsor to generate more revenue and maximise the financial value of the UH brand.	New and prospective corporate sponsors / private benefactors	0	+5
		Lead sponsorship agreement.	0	Introduced by 2023
Public funding	Reduce reliance on Sport NI funding to insulate UH from the effects of reductions in public funding.	Sport NI funding as a percentage of total income.	39%	-14%
	Identify and secure new sources of funding from government departments and related agencies.	New public sector grants secured.	3	+5
	Support clubs to identify and secure to public funding for revenue and/or capital based projects.	No. of clubs supported in applications for funding.	0	+10

Strategic Framework, Outcomes And Objectives

OUTCOME 2: SAFE & SUSTAINABLE CLUBS				
We will:	Resulting in:	Measured by:	Baseline	Target
<i>Support and develop clubs to be safe, sustainable and welcoming, to be the best they can be and create an effective environment for members, coaches and volunteers.</i>	<i>Effective, sustainable and connected hockey clubs with growing membership levels year on year.</i>	<i>More players, more teams, more umpires and more volunteers.</i>	2021	2026
ACTIVITY	OBJECTIVE	MEASURES OF SUCCESS		
Club resources, webinars and networking	Develop, and deliver a portfolio of resources that provide umpires, coaches, volunteers and players with advice or guidance to help them progress.	No. of courses/webinars delivered to umpires, coaches, volunteers and players.	15	+5
Club accreditation, safeguarding and inclusion	Encourage all clubs to work towards achieving UH's new 'Club Assurance Accreditation' to promote high standards of club governance and administration, including safeguarding.	No. of clubs with a valid Club Assurance Accreditation.	11	+49
Facilities advice and advocacy	Be proactive in working with facility owners and operators to safeguard existing facility.	No. of clubs supported by UH	0	+20
	Provide high-quality advisory service to hockey clubs in support of planned facility development.	% of clubs satisfied with advice provided by UH.	TBC (2021)	-
Coach education and development	Deliver a high-quality coach education programme to enhance capacity at a club level and throughout the participation pathway.	No. of accredited coaches.	432	+318
		No. of coaches attending CPD.	569	+181
		% of coaches satisfied with support	N/A	
Umpire education and development	Work with Hockey Ireland to foster a consistently high standard of match officiating by delivering a programme of development opportunities.	No. of accredited umpires.	146	+29
		% of umpires satisfied with support from UH.	TBC (2021)	-
Develop and celebrate volunteers	Extend the existing youth panel to engage with a minimum of one young person (aged 17-24) from each affiliated club, ensuring fair representation of views from clubs regardless size, type or location.	No. of young people (aged 17-24 in UH's youth panel.	12	+40
		No. of clubs represented on UH's youth panel.	12	+40
	Plan and deliver an annual event to increase engagement with the UH family and to celebrate the contribution and support provided by volunteers.	Delivery of annual celebratory events targeting volunteers and the entire Ulster Hockey family.	Initiated	Introduced by 2023

Strategic Framework, Outcomes And Objectives

OUTCOME 3: PARTICIPATION GROWTH AND DIVERSIFICATION				
We will:	Resulting in:	Measured by:	Baseline	Target
Maximise hockey opportunities for children, young people and adults in communities across the Province and enhance their experience of the sport.	Increased recruitment and improved retention of players within Ulster Hockey's clubs, compared with the 2019 baseline.	New players actively engaged and involved in the sport year-on-year.	2021	2026
ACTIVITY	OBJECTIVE	MEASURES OF SUCCESS		
More people playing	Increase the number of people participating in hockey as members of UH-affiliated clubs	No. of participant members at affiliated clubs	12,000	+10%
	Develop and reinforce links between schools and clubs to encourage children and young people to become part of the hockey family, by investing in coaching and coach education in primary schools.	No. of primary (& secondary) schools supported by UH to deliver the sport within the school environment.	90 (78)	+100% (+9%)
	Where appropriate, and dependent upon resources, develop schools-based Youth Blitzes for children and young people to play hockey for the first time.	No. of school-based Youth Blitzes planned and delivered by UH.	50	+100%
Different people playing	Be inclusive, and reach out to non-traditional hockey playing people and areas, through efforts such as the Good Relations programme.	No. of people engaged from within targeted areas by UH.	0	+200
	Consider supporting a club and/or district council to develop a pilot scheme to provide Flyerz hockey to people with physical and/or learning disabilities.	Design and delivery of pilot scheme targeting people with a disability.	Initiated	Complete by 2023
Different ways of playing	Explore the potential of extending the range of competitive outlets for year-round hockey participation, with a view to offering alternative ways to play, to include Indoor Hockey, Hockey 5s, Mixed Hockey (junior and senior), and Midweek hockey.	A feasibility study conducted to test market demand for additional participation opportunities for both club members and new participants.	Initiated	Complete by 2022
Young people playing to adulthood	Address the gap between junior and senior hockey by instituting an U18 club competition that provides a development opportunity for young players.	No. of clubs entering teams into a new U18 competition(s) for both male and female players.	0	24
Providing more Masters hockey	Respond to the evident demand for Masters hockey (aged 40 and above) by organising a club/ community-based programme of participation emphasising fun and encouraging social interaction.	No. of clubs entering teams into a club-community based programme of Masters hockey for men and women.	0	24

Strategic Framework, Outcomes And Objectives

OUTCOME 4: EFFECTIVE ATHLETE-CENTRED & CONNECTED TALENT PATHWAY				
We will:	Resulting in:	Measured by:	Baseline	Target
<i>Work in collaboration with Hockey Ireland and other key stakeholders to create an inclusive athlete-centre pathway which connects talented players to opportunities to achieve their full potential.</i>	<i>The identification of a representative pool of talented players from Ulster's hockey clubs.</i>	<i>Increased numbers of players identified as having the potential to progress from a larger number of clubs.</i>	2021	2026
ACTIVITY	OBJECTIVE	MEASURES OF SUCCESS		
Talent pathway	Make athlete needs the central focus of the talent pathway by reviewing and refining the system which nurtures all of the available talent regardless of type, size or location of a club or school.	No. of players from clubs-schools engaged in UH's talent development programmes.	433	+5%
		No. of clubs represented on the talent pathway.	20	+25%
Addressing drop-out	Address the gap between junior and senior hockey in Ulster by instituting an U18 club competition that provides an additional development opportunity.	No. of players involved in planned U18 competition(s) for both male and female players.	0	+360
Consistent coaching philosophy	Work with Hockey Ireland and other provincial units to develop a clear and consistent coaching philosophy and to support coach development within the workforce.	An agreed and embedded coaching philosophy, including clear and simple messages relating to performance expectations.	Initiated	Complete by 2023
Producing International-ready players	Clarify the expectations of national team coaches so that clubs can better support the development of international-ready athletes along the pathway.	No. of players from a diverse range of UH's clubs progress along the talent pathway.	31	+10%
	Recognise and celebrate the role of clubs in the development of talented players.			
Supporting International teams	Support athletes selected to international squads by improving the quality of locally available coaching, mentoring and support services.	% of talented athletes satisfied with the support provided by Hockey Ireland and coaches on the talent pathway.	TBC (2021)	-
	Encourage commitment to international hockey by ensuring that Ulster hosts its fair share of training sessions and international fixtures.	No. of international hockey training sessions and/or fixtures staged in Ulster.	10	+100%

Strategic Framework, Outcomes And Objectives

OUTCOME 5: RECOGNISED AND VALUED BRAND				
We will:	Resulting in:	Measured by:	Baseline	Target
Communicate and advocate our brand values with professionalism and passion to build and foster positive relationships both within and outside the sport.	Improved collaboration leading to more investment and wider community involvement in the sport.	Increased levels of involvement and engagement in the sport, more positive media coverage at local, regional and national level and commercial interest.	2021	2026
ACTIVITY	OBJECTIVE	MEASURES OF SUCCESS		
Communications strategy	Develop and implement a communications strategy to strengthen UH's profile and brand, showcase the achievements of players, teams, clubs and schools, and enhance propositions for commercial sponsors and investors.	Strategy developed and implemented by UH.	Initiated	Complete by 2022
Distinctive brand identity	Develop a distinctive brand identity for UH which reflects the vision and values of the organisation, in line with brand guidelines, and is used consistently in all communications and promotional activity.	Brand identity integrated within all internal and external communications.	Initiated	Complete by 2022
Increased promotional activity	Exploit the full range of media channels to promote the sport of hockey to the widest possible audience, emphasising the inclusive nature of the game, and drawing upon recent success at international level.	No. of new followers on social media channels. Twitter Facebook Instagram	8,000 7,000 4,300	+25% +10% +50%
Hosting high-profile events	Work in partnership with Hockey Ireland and other provincial governing bodies to host a high-profile domestic and/or international fixture(s) to raise the profile of hockey in Ulster and Ireland as a whole, with the aim of achieving significant media coverage.	A 'high-profile fixture planned and delivered by UH.	Identified	Delivered by 2024

Strategic Framework, Outcomes And Objectives

OUTCOME 6: RESPONSIVE AND EFFECTIVE LEADERSHIP				
We will:	Resulting in:	Measured by:	Baseline	Target
<i>Continue to improve how we govern Hockey in Ulster, leading by example, working in partnership with all interested parties and responding to the aspirations of our members.</i>	<i>An organisation that is trusted, works to the highest professional standards and is valued by all key stakeholders, including funders, clubs and members.</i>	<i>Continuous monitoring of satisfaction through stakeholder feedback and membership consultation.</i>	2021	2026
ACTIVITY	OBJECTIVE	MEASURES OF SUCCESS		
Leading by example	Operate to best practice standards in governance and management reflecting principles of openness and accountability, in line with the Code of Good Governance	Self-appraisal against the five key principles of good governance.	Initiated	Complete by 2022
	Continually review, adopt and implement best practice in safeguarding and anti-doping.	External review by external bodies to provide assurance statement.	Initiated	Complete by 2022
	Identify existing management information datasets to support the monitoring and evaluation of progress against strategic objectives, and set meaningful targets for the improvement of data collection and management systems.	Adhering to Companies House requirements and ensuring delivery of organisational purpose.	Initiated	Complete by 2022
	Developing new and innovative programmes/ services that harness latest technology and appeal to new stakeholders.	Evidence based performance management system of reporting.	Initiated	Complete by 2022
Effective partnership working	Identify and work with a range of stakeholders that will support UH to deliver its strategic objectives.	No. of new programmes and initiatives.	0	5
	Conduct a stakeholder mapping exercise to target high value partnership arrangements and mutually beneficial projects.	No. of new strategic partnerships established.	1	5
Responding to members' needs and aspirations	Engage with members to better understand the issues and challenges faced by volunteers at club level, via regular consultation.	% members satisfied with the services and support provided by UH.	70%	90%



Resourcing Our Plan

Our Challenge

The economic climate in the aftermath of Covid-19 will continue to be subject to change, with the pace of that change increasing in recent years, particularly in the sports sector. It is important that Ulster Hockey stays attuned to those changes, understands the potential impact to both the sport and the organisation and ensures that we are well-placed to respond accordingly with a more resilient financial strategy.

Membership Resilience

As a not-for-profit organisation income generated is reinvested in the sport to deliver the strategic plan and ultimately benefit our members and stakeholders. As a membership body, the strategy we have established sets out our ambition to increase the resilience of our affiliation and membership income. Primarily, this will be achieved through improved engagement with clubs & scholols and ensuring that we continually demonstrate value.

We recognise the importance of ensuring that any additional income generated from membership growth is invested into the sport and supports the organisation's priorities. Continued investment in membership and other core services will underpin the ability of the organisation to support a larger membership base and improve the quality of service to our members.

Commercial Opportunity

The commercial sponsorship, rights sales and partnerships sectors have undergone considerable change over the past decade. Organisations are looking for 'Corporate Social Responsibility' investments or mutually beneficial marketing partnerships rather than traditional rights sales. In addition, the economic downturn has created a particularly challenging economic climate. To maximise additional income in this area it is vital that Ulster Hockey develops its own insight and commercial capabilities, working in partnership with Hockey Ireland. An important aspect of developing long-term commercial partnerships is community engagement and alignment of brand values.

The delivery of other programmes, outside the core membership, will generate income in addition to their primary objective of driving participation. We will identify other opportunities to generate income from outside the sport to reinvest back into the Ulster Hockey family.

Reducing Reliance on Public Sector

We are clear that we must be focused on determining our own organisation's strategy and priorities, before seeking to identify compatible and mutually beneficial partnerships with public and third-sector funding organisations. Over the past four years we have become less reliant on investment from Sport NI and whilst the alignment between our new strategy and the emerging strategies of the Department for Communities and Sport NI is encouraging, we also recognise that public funding is increasingly insecure.

Having set clear priorities and ambitions in this strategy, we will continue to work in partnership with Sport NI to meet mutual goals in the future with the aim of sustaining the current level of investment of c.£170k per annum over subsequent funding cycles from 2022 onwards. As Sport NI investment has been provided to Hockey Ireland for high performance, we will work with and through Hockey Ireland to implement our strategic outcomes.

Resourcing Our Plan

Financial Strategy

In a constantly changing climate, we need to continue to challenge our dependencies with the ultimate ambition of reducing the organisation's reliance on any single funding source. We continue to use different financial scenarios, in light of potential changes to member behaviour, to plan public sector funding and partnerships with the commercial sector.

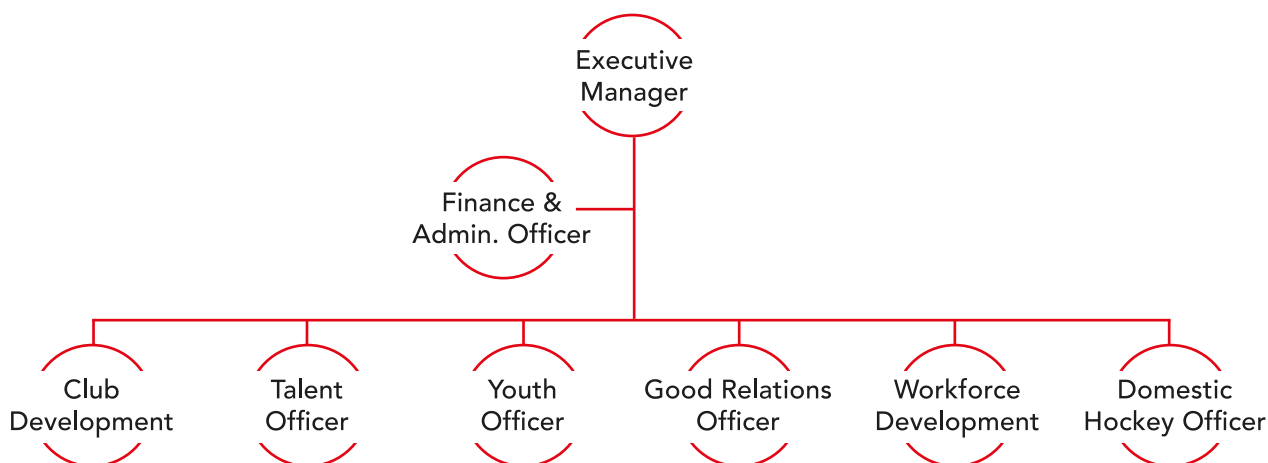
Our Financial Strategy over the next five years will therefore be to:

- Increase annual reinvestment level from £305k to £555k;
- Become more self-sustainable with public investment reducing from 52% to 41%;
- Have more resilient membership income through club engagement and member retention;
- Develop new commercial income opportunities to a target of 18% of total income;

- Explore more diverse income opportunities and further income generation from participants taking part in Development Programmes (recorded as 'Other Income');
- Retain current healthy financial reserve of £270k to absorb any unforeseen changes in our financial planning assumptions and at least 6 month operating costs.

Investing in Our Staffing, Skills and Systems

To enable us to achieve the ambitious targets outlined in this plan and "inspire, grow and sustain" an active hockey family we will require resources to employ and develop our staff, strengthen our sporting systems, deliver our services and run a high-performing organisation. Throughout this Strategic Plan period, we will develop annual Operational Plans based on our financial projections and work towards achieving our objectives and targets as effectively and efficiently as possible and within our financial limits. The current staff structure, which will be reviewed following the adoption of this Strategic Plan, is set out below:



(Structure as of August 2021)

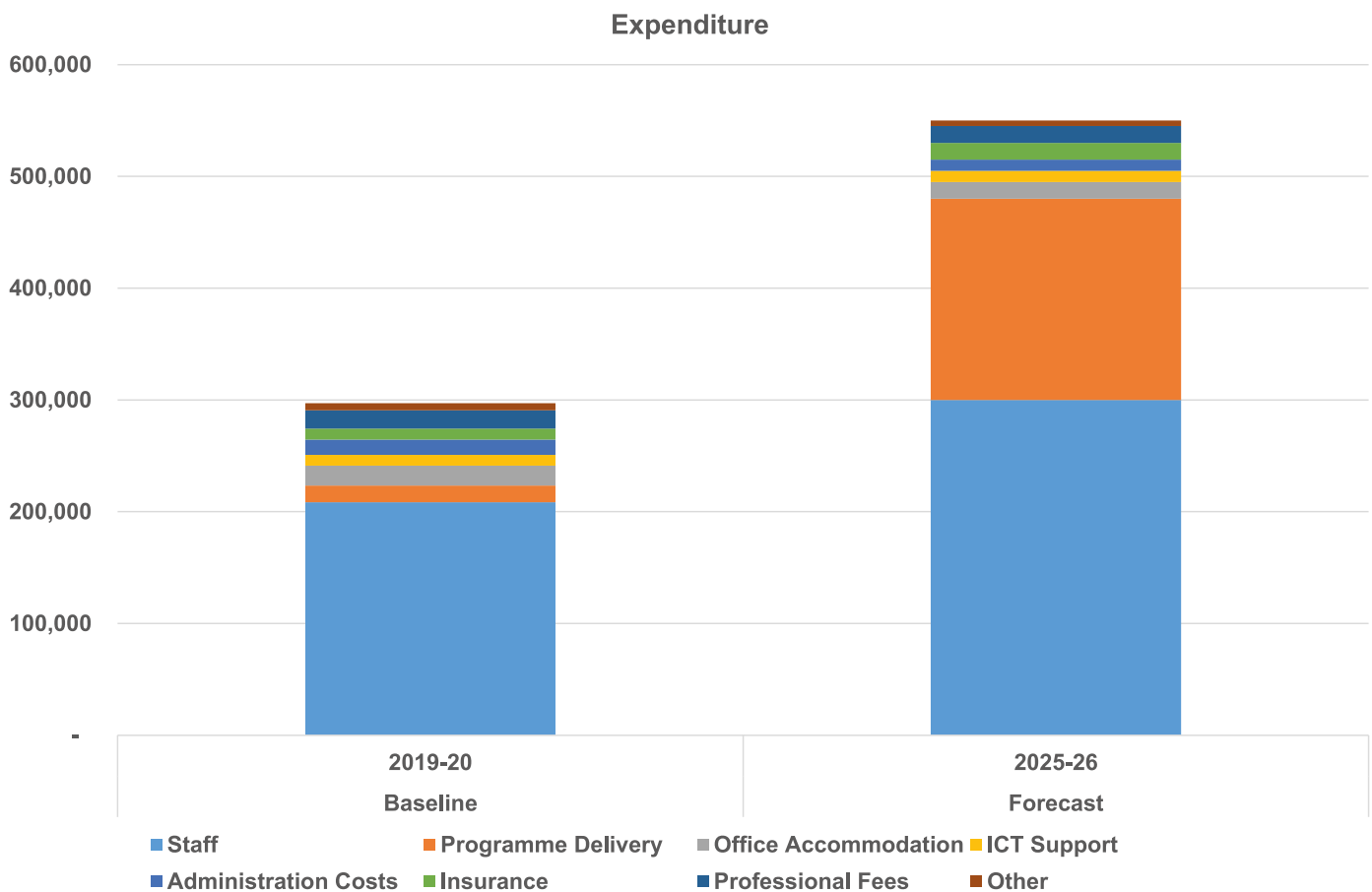
Resourcing Our Plan

Target Expenditure

We have used our annual accounts for 2019/20 as the baseline financial position (as opposed to the annual accounts for 2020/21 which were heavily impacted by the Covid-19 pandemic) and forecast

the total cost of delivering our new Strategic Plan over the next five years to be £2.3m, with the breakdown of expenditure compared with the baseline below:

Figure 7 - Forecast Change in Expenditure Distribution, 2019-20 to 2025-26



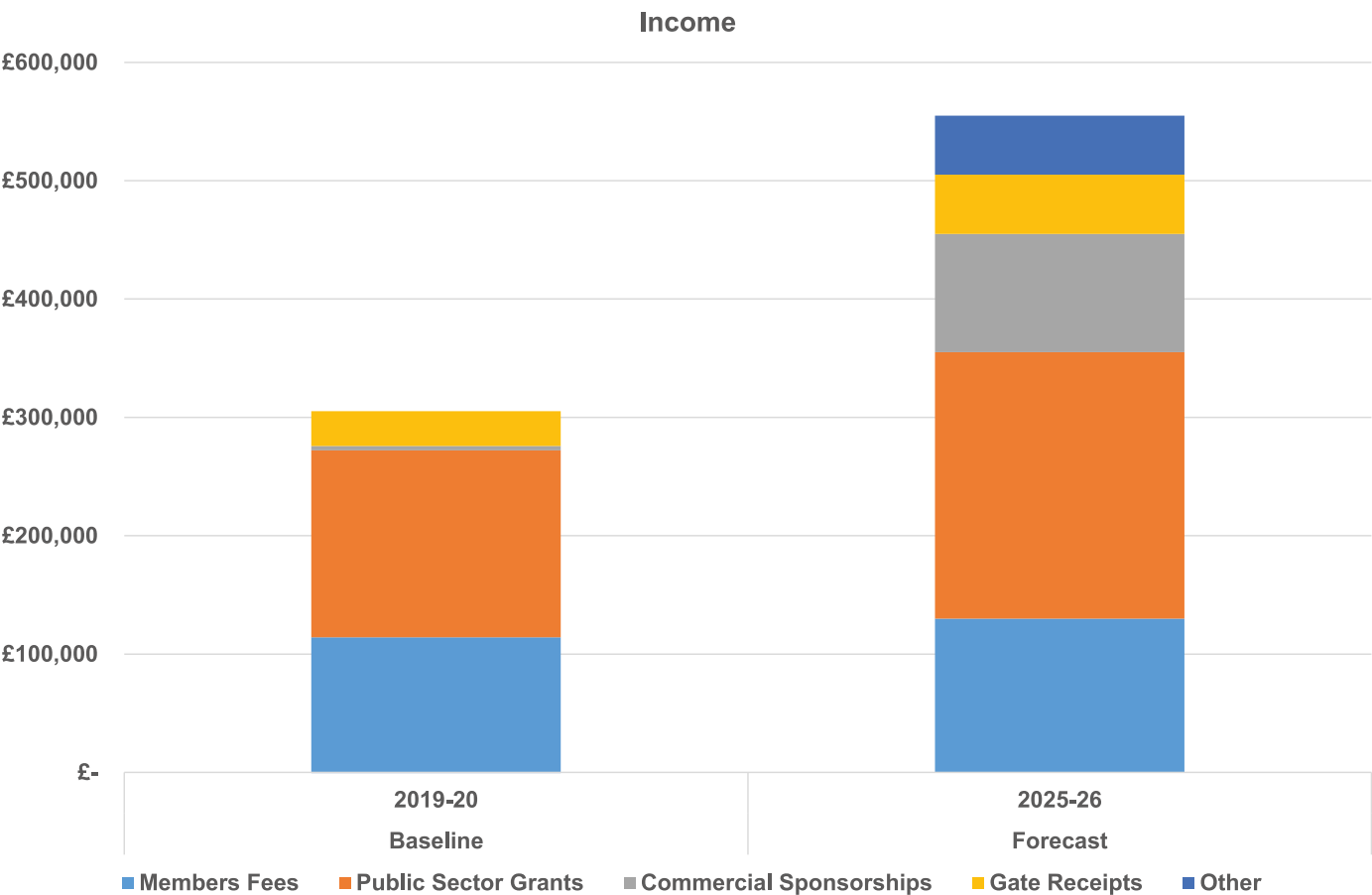
Resourcing Our Plan

Target Income

We have also used our current baseline financial position and forecasted the total funding required to deliver our new Strategic Plan over the next

five years and retain a healthy financial reserve, with the breakdown of income compared with the baseline year below:

Figure 8 - Forecast Change in Income Distribution, 2019-20 to 2025-26



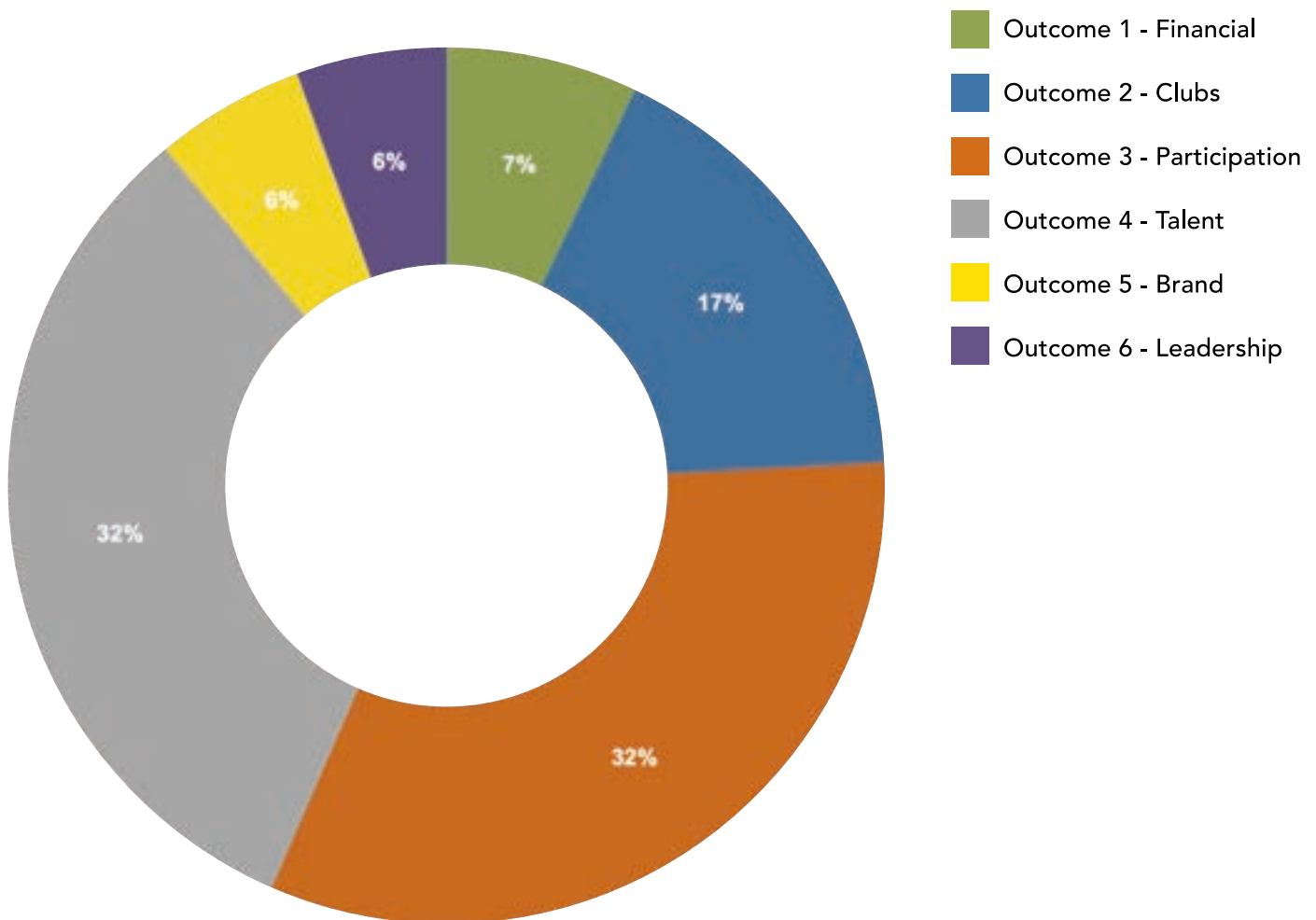
Resourcing Our Plan

Target Resource Allocation by Strategic Outcome

Our costed delivery plan has also been aligned with our six strategic outcomes to highlight the spread and prioritisation of our limited resources

to ensure we operate as efficiently and effectively as possible and maximise impact for our clubs, members and stakeholders.

Figure 9 - Resource Allocation by Strategic Outcome



Our headline financial forecasts above are supported by detailed annual income and expenditure projections that will underpin

our operational plans and be subject to ongoing scrutiny under Outcome 1 - 'Financial Sustainability'.

Achieving Our Outcomes

Ulster Hockey is fully committed to implementing the ambitions and aspirations as set out in this Strategic Plan. This Plan sets out a number of key objectives and specific actions that will be undertaken to deliver our overall ambition of charting a sustainable and prosperous future for the organisation and clubs, whilst providing targeted growth in key areas.

The successful implementation of this plan is contingent on there being a thorough and ongoing monitoring policy in place. This will facilitate the systematic tracking of progress towards achieving the targets embedded within this document, deemed necessary to achieve its overall purpose. The successful delivery of this plan is also reliant on several dependencies, namely: retaining and adding to our staff team; securing resources and funding; the development of an information management system to track progress against key indicators and; the participation of clubs and members in reviewing and assessing the impact of the Plan.

Our Strategic Plan has set out to deliver six Outcomes, in a first step towards the adoption of an Outcomes Based Accountability (OBA) which aims to provide a common-sense approach to monitoring and evaluating the delivery of our programmes and services. Sport NI has adopted OBA as its approach to monitoring and evaluating its 'Supporting Sport to Build Back Better' initiative and it is likely that Sport NI funding programmes will incorporate OBA as the preferred methodology in future.

The OBA approach minimises paperwork by only gathering information relevant to the project; the focus is on the impact of interventions rather than solely measuring inputs and outputs. OBA acknowledges that the impact of interventions can be aggregated – several smaller interventions can contribute to wider outcomes. So OBA is recognised as a valid methodology in assessing outcomes resulting from sports development activities. Critically, it asks: 'What did we do, how well did we do it, and what difference did it make?'

Adopting OBA as a monitoring and evaluation methodology requires evidence of performance beyond numbers of participants, activities and programmes. Whilst these statistical indicators are important for different reasons they cannot reflect the difference that our programmes and activities make to people's physical and mental health in particular and people's lifestyles in general. In adopting this approach and demonstrating the broader impact of our work, we will be better positioned to take advantage of a wider range funding opportunities and become more sustainable as an organisation.

To fulfill our commitments in the plan and achieve our shared vision and objectives, we will:

- Establish a Strategy Implementation Committee, tasked specifically with holding us all to account, particularly on our key targets and KPIs. This will be chaired by the organisation's Vice-Chairperson.
- Develop a costed annual implementation plan for each of the key outcomes. This will set out key steps to be taken to deliver actions and set out responsibility and accountability.
- Where impact measurement and reporting rely on a management information system, commit to implementing robust systems and processes for capturing data and measuring the impact of our work in its absence.
- Conduct an annual review of the plan and commit to updating or amending actions where necessary.
- Communicate progress to members via the Communications Strategy and through the development of annual impact reports.
- Invest in resources to ensure that the plan can be delivered and is achievable.
- Ensure that our governance structures, decision making processes and leadership are fit for purpose and empower our staff and representatives to deliver on our commitments in the plan.

In Conclusion...

Hockey is a sport enjoyed by people of all ages and abilities and participation levels are continuing to rise, particularly at the grassroots level of the game. However, the infrastructure requires focus and investment to ensure greater support, visibility and media exposure in the coming years.

In the current climate we will face many challenges as we implement this plan. The willingness of our clubs, schools and valuable teams of volunteers and staff will be vital if we are to inspire, build and sustain an active hockey family and move into a new and exciting phase of development.

This strategy clearly sets out the strategic priorities that will help to inspire, build and sustain the future development of our game. We believe that with increased resources and more innovative ways of working with all our delivery partners, this vision can be achieved.

On a final note, we would like to thank those from the hockey family, including our members and partners, whose thoughtful and insightful feedback has helped shape the future direction of our sport, as outlined in this Strategic Plan.





Ulster Hockey would like to acknowledge the efforts of Paul Donnelly (Ulster University) and David Barrett (Sheffield Hallam University) for leading the process of developing this plan.

We would also like to thank all stakeholders, board, staff, youth forum and members for their input into the focus groups and surveys which have formed the basis of this ambitious plan

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125 Years of Hockey in Ulster