

SERVICE LEVEL AGREEMENT

between

THE ULSTER-SCOTS AGENCY

and

DEPARTMENT FOR COMMUNITIES

and

**DEPARTMENT OF
TOURISM, CULTURE, ARTS, GAELTACHT,
SPORT AND MEDIA**

2023

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1. STATUTORY AND GOVERNANCE CONTEXT TO THIS AGREEMENT

The British-Irish Agreement Act, 1999, and The North/South Cooperation (Implementation Bodies) (Northern Ireland) Order 1999, are the founding legislation for the work of the Ulster-Scots Agency, and the Financial Memorandum mentioned in this legislation provides context regarding governance for the organisation.

The Department of Tourism, Culture, Arts, Gaeltacht, Sport and Media and the Department for Communities have confirmed to the Ulster-Scots Agency Board that this Service Agreement adheres to the statutory and governance provisions mentioned above.

The Ulster-Scots Agency has statutory obligations under British-Irish Agreement Act, 1999/ An tAcht um Chomhaontú na Breataine-Na hÉireann, 1999:

Ulster-Scots

The statutory function of the Ulster-Scots Agency is the promotion of greater awareness and use of Ullans and Ulster-Scots cultural issues, both within Northern Ireland and throughout the island. In carrying out its functions in relation to Ullans and Ulster-Scots cultural issues the Agency may, having regard to the contexts in both jurisdictions –

- a) provide advice to both administrations, public bodies and other groups in the private and voluntary sectors;
- b) undertake research and promotional campaigns; and
- c) undertake support of projects and grant-aid bodies and groups as necessary.

“Ullans” is to be understood as the variety of the Scots language traditionally found in parts of Northern Ireland and Donegal. “Ulster-Scots cultural issues” relate to the cultural traditions of the part of the population of Northern Ireland and the border counties which is of Scottish ancestry and the influence of their cultural traditions on others, both within the island of Ireland and in the rest of the world.

The Body/Agency will have all the powers necessary for, or incidental to, the exercise of its functions.

2. SERVICE LEVEL AGREEMENT PARTNERS

The partners in this Service Level Agreement (SLA) are The Ulster-Scots Agency (U-SA) and the Sponsor Departments (Department for Communities and Department of Tourism, Culture, Arts, Gaeltacht, Sport and Media / Department for Communities).

3. SERVICE LEVEL AGREEMENT PURPOSE

This Agreement is a performance contract to formalise an agreed level of service between the **U-SA** and the Sponsor Departments. This is to ensure that resources are used in an effective, efficient manner to deliver a high-quality service to the public. The SLA outlines the **U-SA** targets for **2023** and defines the output and outcome indicators against which performance indicators/measures will be reviewed throughout the year. The SLA will be reviewed annually. This SLA is for the period **1 January 2023 to 31 December 2023** or until a new SLA will be signed between the agency and Sponsor Departments.

The primary aims of this SLA are to:

- Define the roles of the U-SA and the Sponsor Departments;
- Define expectations of the Sponsoring Departments for 2023;
- Outline the predicted inputs, outputs and outcomes of the activities of the U-SA; and
- The performance of those activities through the monitoring of agreed targets and the agreed output and outcome indicators.

The Service Level Agreement will be published on the websites of the Sponsoring Departments and on the U-SA website.

4. JOINT COMMITMENTS

All parties are committed to the following:

- Ensuring communications, co-operation and sharing of information which is pro-active and timely in terms of service delivery;
- Providing prompt and timely responses to correspondence, information requests and related matters;
- Keeping each other fully apprised and updated on all key issues; and
- Achieving agreed targets efficiently as well as the promotion of partnership, responsiveness and working for the common interest in their on-going joint activities.

5. SPONSOR DEPARTMENTS' RESPONSIBILITIES

The Sponsor Departments will provide the following supports for the U-SA to enable it to fulfil its remit:

- Sponsor Departments will formally write to the U-SA as early as possible to set out the financial allocation for the year together with any related administrative matters.
- Authorisation for expenditure and staffing in accordance with Public Financial Procedures in both jurisdictions;
- Updates on Public Financial Procedures and on Civil Service HR Policy in both jurisdictions (information is also available on the Finance Departments' websites);
- Guidance on the Civil Service HR Policy, public expenditure, remuneration and industrial relations, procurement and contracts, Government accountability and governance in both jurisdictions;
- Guidance on new legislative requirements in both jurisdictions;
- Advice and guidance on Public Service Reform initiatives in both jurisdictions; and
- Payments to the U-SA will be processed expeditiously on receipt of drawdown requests.

6. THE ULSTER-SCOTS AGENCY RESPONSIBILITIES

The U-SA will fulfil the requirements of the Financial Memorandum which sets out the financial procedures and accountability arrangements which govern the financial relationship between the NSMC, Sponsor Departments, the Finance Departments and the NSLB, including:

- Preparation and submission of **Business Plan 2024** to Sponsor Departments within the agreed timescales;
- Ensure that the Body's strategic aims and objectives support the Sponsor Departments' wider strategic aims.
- Accountability arrangements (*see Appendix A for details*);
- Provision of **Annual Reports and Accounts** within the appropriate timescales.
- Compliance with all relevant statutory provisions including FOI, data protection, child protection etc.;
- Provision of information within timeframes determined by Sponsor Departments in relation to Dáil and Assembly questions; Ministerial briefing (submissions, debates and speeches) within the specified timeframe;
- Provision of data and information requested by Sponsor Departments in preparation for and at regular monitoring meetings;
- Provision of data and information requested by Sponsor Departments arising from NSMC meetings;
- Maintenance of robust audit and risk arrangements;
- Implementation of actions to ensure compliance with public administrative and financial procedures and related practices; and
- Compliance with Best Practice guidance.

7. PERFORMANCE MEASUREMENT

The key outputs under the SLA based on the **U-SA's 2023 Business Plan** are set out in Appendix B.

The U-SA will provide progress reports on all key deliverables and corporate governance procedures for quarterly Monitoring Meeting with Sponsor Departments and, where appropriate, to Ministers at NSMC meetings.

An Annual Report of the NSLB's work will be produced following the audit by the Northern Ireland Audit Office and the Comptroller and Auditor General.

8. POTENTIAL RISK FACTORS

As outlined in the Financial Statements published by the U-SA, robust arrangements are in place within the organisation to deal with risks, including any risk which could potentially impact on the expected level of service for the duration of this agreement. The Management, Audit and Risk Assurance Committee and the Board all have a role in the implementation of these arrangements. Sponsor Departments will continue to receive regular updates with regard to the organisation's Risk Register. The biggest risk is human and financial resources.

9. FINANCE ALLOCATION

The funding allocation is dependent on the ability by the U-SA to demonstrate it can meet the aims set out in this agreement in addition to other performance monitoring processes which may be introduced.

The U-SA will provide the following:

- Cash flow statements with each request for drawdown funds;
- Details of the balance on each account belonging to the Agency with each request for a drawdown of funds; and
- Drawdown requests broken down into their component parts of
 - Non-pay
 - Pay
 - Pension (ongoing cost)
 - Pension lump sums
 - Overtime
 - Allowances, and
 - Employers PRSI.

Payment of the full drawdown is dependent on compliance with the above procedures and any other requirement outlined in this document. One drawdown per month will be processed. Only in exceptional circumstances will any additional request be considered.

In addition, the U-SA agrees to provide the following:

- Annual profiles of expected drawdown broken down according to the above headings;
- Reconciliations between drawdown and actual expenditure (broken down according to the above headings) as and when required; and
- All information in relation to applications for financial and performance monitoring information within a time frame determined by Sponsor Departments.

10. FLEXIBILITY AND AMENDMENT OF TARGETS

Agreed performance targets may change during the period of this agreement. This may occur as a result of legislative changes, changes to government/ministerial priorities, normal operational factors and/or more general political, economic, financial or other priorities.

Should amendments be required, the U-SA will collaborate with the Sponsor Departments to agree any amendments required to the targets.

11. ROLE OF THE BOARD AND CHAIR

The U-SA Board has the responsibility to oversee the work of the U-SA and ensure that it fulfils its statutory remits and obligations in addition to the specific performance targets outlined in this document.

The U-SA Chair is responsible for ensuring that continuous monitoring of performance will be undertaken based on the targets agreed and that statutory and related obligations will be fulfilled.

Exchange rate to be used for 2023 is €1 = £0.86

APPENDICES

Subject

Accountability Arrangements for the U-SA

Service Level and Performance Measurement

Resources/Inputs 2023

Appendix

A

B

C

Appendix A

ACCOUNTABILITY ARRANGEMENTS FOR THE ULSTER-SCOTS AGENCY

Content & Form	Accountability to whom	Frequency
Business Plan	Sponsor Departments	Annually
Corporate Plan	Sponsor Departments	Three-yearly basis
Monitoring Meetings	Sponsor Departments	Quarterly
Assurance Statements	Sponsor Departments	Bi-annually
Risk Register	Sponsor Departments	Quarterly
Resource Consumption	Sponsor Departments	Monthly
Cash Drawdown	Sponsor Departments	Monthly

Appendix B

SERVICE LEVEL AND PERFORMANCE MEASUREMENT

Pending formal NSMC approval for the 2021 and 2022 Business Plans, indicative key outputs/targets based on the agency's 2023 draft Business Plan are set out below.

1. The Agency will identify, interpret and animate Ulster-Scots language, heritage and culture.

- Deliver a programme of activity in relation to Ulster-Scots Language Week.
- Deliver a programme of activity in relation to key dates in the Ulster-Scots cultural calendar.
- Support a programme of activity around Ulster-Scots Day.
- Develop a promotional programme for Ulster-Scots around national and international awareness days.
- Support a programme of large-scale heritage projects promoting aspects of Ulster-Scots language, heritage and culture.
- Support a programme of Ulster-Scots promotional exhibitions.
- Deliver a programme of Ulster-Scots promotional events.
- Deliver a programme of Blue Plaques around Ulster celebrating significant Ulster-Scots figures.
- Deliver an annual programme of printed promotional activity.
- Deliver an annual programme of online promotional activity.
- Deliver an annual programme of radio advertising.
- Support primary schools via the Ulster-Scots Flagship School Programme.
- Deliver a North/South School Twinning Programme.
- Deliver a programme of activity in relation to the Ulster-Scots Broadcast Fund.
- Deliver a programme of Ulster-Scots Afterschool Clubs in Primary Schools.
- Deliver a programme of educational workshops for schools.
- Support a programme of Ulster-Scots music/dance tuition in schools.
- Support a programme of partnerships for the preservation and/or promotion of Ulster-Scots heritage assets.
- Deliver a programme of activity in relation to the Coronation.

2. The Agency will equip individuals and groups with knowledge and skills to engage with Ulster-Scots language, heritage and culture.

- Deliver Core Funding Programme.
- Deliver Community Impact Grant Programme.
- Deliver Music & Dance Tuition Grant Programme.
- Deliver Community Festivals Grant Programme.
- Deliver Summer School Grant Programme.
- Deliver FAS Other Grant Programme.
- Deliver Small Events Grant Programme.
- Deliver Energy Support Grant Programme.
- Deliver Pilot Border Counties Bands Grant Programme.
- Deliver a programme of talks on Ulster-Scots language to schools and community groups.

- Support the promotion of Ulster-Scots through a programme of community radio broadcasting.
- Deliver 2 heritage projects in ROI border counties.
- Support 300 learners in achieving recognised qualifications in music and dance.
- Deliver a programme of events to mark the achievements of Ulster-Scots learners.
- Support delivery of the Richard Parkes MBE Pipe Majors Masterclass.
- Deliver Ingenious Ulster learning resource.
- Deliver Education Duty Seminar.
- Develop an Ulster-Scots Agency language development plan.
- Establish an Ulster-Scots Agency language advisory group.

Additional Targets in respect of 2021 Baseline Budget Uplift

- Develop and implement an annual Research Programme.
- Develop and implement an annual Consultation Plan.
- Develop and implement an annual Advice and Guidance programme.
- Develop and implement an annual Language Action Plan.
- Develop and implement an annual Youth Development Plan.
- Deliver Youth Grants Programme.
- Increase Community Impact Programme by 25%.

3. The Agency will reach out locally and globally, to enhance friendship with people in Ulster whose primary identity is not Ulster-Scots: and foster kinship with people beyond Ulster who have Ulster-Scots roots.

- Deliver a programme of outreach to other cultural minority communities.
- Deliver a series of projects in relation to the Border Reivers.
- Develop a plan for USA diaspora outreach.
- Deliver an East/West School Twinning Programme.
- Support a programme of East/West relationship building.
- Deliver a programme of activity in relation to the Ulster-Scots diaspora in the Commonwealth

