



NIJAC

*Northern Ireland Judicial
Appointments Commission*

Northern Ireland Judicial Appointments Commission



**Annual Business Plan
2025 – 2026**

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Introduction

By Tonya McCormac, Chief Executive of the Northern Ireland Judicial Appointments Commission (NIJAC)



“This is a very special year for NIJAC as we prepare to celebrate our 20th anniversary.

Since our establishment in 2005, NIJAC have developed strong partnerships with many organisations including The Executive Office, the Lady Chief Justice’s Office, the Law Society of NI, the Bar of NI, the Northern Ireland Courts and Tribunals Service, the Departments of Justice, Economy and Communities and we look forward to enhancing those relationships in 2025 -26.

Over the last 20 years, NIJAC has celebrated significant milestones and achievements including increasing female representation across Courts and Tribunals, making significant steps to modernise the process of assessment, selection and broadening the depth and reach of our applicant pools. NIJAC will continue to look for opportunities to innovate through digitalisation and new ways of working during 2025-26.

We remain strongly committed to diversity and inclusion as an organisation and have recently received the highly regarded Diversity Mark Accreditation which will inspire our ongoing commitment and strengthen our resolve in progressing diversity and inclusion in both the Commission, as an employer, and in making appointments to judicial office in the Courts and Tribunals in Northern Ireland.

This new planning year will see NIJAC continue to focus on achieving its two long term outcomes:

- NIJAC is recognised as a body which delivers appointments, solely on the basis of merit, to a judiciary which reflects the community (as far as it is reasonably practicable to do so).
- NIJAC is an open, transparent and well-run organisation and valued by stakeholders.

Through this Outcomes Based Accountability approach, NIJAC will continue to demonstrate the impact of our work and measure our success as a public body in Northern Ireland.

This Business Plan continues to set the framework for our work and is underpinned by NIJAC's corporate values. This document is the first Annual Business Plan within a new 5-year Corporate Plan 2025-30. This ensures a clear vision and setting the strategic direction for the future of the Commission. NIJAC's Corporate Plan 2025-30 and this Annual Business Plan 2025-26 ensures NIJAC as a public body plays its part in the wider delivery of the Programme for Government (2024-27) working collectively with others to enable meaningful change in transforming public services in Northern Ireland.

I would like to thank the NIJAC Chair, Board, staff, and our stakeholders for their continued commitment to the work of the Commission and for their support during the last year. I am looking forward to continuing to work with all during the next year as we continue to make appointments, solely on the basis of merit, across our Courts and Tribunals in Northern Ireland."



Tonya McCormac
Chief Executive Officer

NIJAC VALUES



This Plan incorporates the outcomes we aspire to as an organisation. It includes key actions and measures for the period April 2025 to March 2026. These will tell us if we are delivering our business well and allow us to implement changes and make improvements, ensuring value for money. All of these are underpinned by the NIJAC Values.



The Programme for Government

On 27 February 2025 the Executive agreed a Programme for Government 2024-2027 '[Our Plan: Doing What Matters Most](#)'. It outlines three missions with cross cutting priorities for making a real difference to the lives of people in Northern Ireland. This is the environment of which all public bodies work.

NIJAC's strategy and annual business objectives will be underpinned by and contribute to the following priorities below:

- **Ending Violence Against Women and Girls**
- **Better Support for Children and Young People with Special Educational Needs**
- **Safer Communities**
- **Reform and Transformation of Public Services**

The Programme for Government sets the context for what we need to do now to make a real difference. As a public body NIJAC has a role in working with others across government and the wider community to support and enable the transformation of public services and improve the well-being of people living in Northern Ireland.



Our Statutory Responsibilities

1. To select, appoint, and recommend for appointment, in respect of all listed judicial offices up to and including High Court Judge.
2. To recommend applicants for appointment solely on the basis of merit.
3. To engage in a programme of action to secure, so far as it is reasonably practicable to do so, that appointments to listed judicial offices are such that those holding judicial office are reflective of the community in Northern Ireland.
4. To engage in a programme of action to secure, so far as it is reasonably practicable to do so, that a range of persons reflective of the community in Northern Ireland is available for consideration whenever we are required to select a person to be appointed, or recommended for appointment, to a listed judicial office.
5. To publish an annual report setting out the activities and accounts for the past year.

This 2025-26 Annual Business Plan will contribute to us achieving our longer-term outcomes. When implementing the various actions within the plan, we will be identifying and managing any potential risks to achieving these and providing assurances to our stakeholders that these risks are being effectively managed by our people, systems and various controls. Through ongoing monitoring and reporting of our performance, we will continue to measure our success in delivering our outcomes.



Contact Details

Northern Ireland Judicial Appointments Commission, Headline Building,
10-14 Victoria Street, Belfast, BT1 3GG

Telephone: 028 9056 9100

Email: judicialappointments@nijac.gov.uk | finance@nijac.gov.uk

Website: www.nijac.gov.uk

X: [@NIJACNews](https://twitter.com/NIJACNews)

LinkedIn: [NI Judicial Appointments Commission](https://www.linkedin.com/company/NI-Judicial-Appointments-Commission)

Theme	Outcomes <i>(Description of intended impact)</i>	Actions <i>(How we will achieve our outcomes)</i>	Measures <i>(How we will measure success)</i>
Recognising Merit	Assurance that NIJAC's Selection Process is fit for purpose and delivers appointments solely on the basis of merit.	<p>Review of the outcomes of existing assessment methods to determine meritorious and equitable outcomes.</p> <hr/> <p>Review of potential for expansion of toolset of assessment methods.</p> <hr/> <p>Review of Assessment and Selection Training.</p>	<p>By September 2025.</p> <hr/> <p>By March 2026.</p> <hr/> <p>By September 2025.</p>

Theme	Outcomes <i>(Description of intended impact)</i>	Actions <i>(How we will achieve our outcomes)</i>	Measures <i>(How we will measure success)</i>
Reflecting the Community	To have a judiciary which is as reflective of the community as far as is reasonably practicable.	<p>Developing and delivering Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) Training for Commissioners and Co-opted Assessors.</p> <hr/> <p>Providing Quarterly and Annual Reports on application, assessment and selection trends which enable the Commission, to analyse and make appropriate decisions on the basis of those reports.</p> <hr/> <p>Monitor, review and report on applicant pool trends focusing on applicants from an ethnic minority background and applicants with a disability to establish baseline information and improve representation in those applying for judicial office.</p>	<p>By September 2025.</p> <hr/> <p>New quarterly and annual reporting system in place by March 2026.</p> <hr/> <p>By March 2026.</p>

Theme	Outcomes <i>(Description of intended impact)</i>	Actions <i>(How we will achieve our outcomes)</i>	Measures <i>(How we will measure success)</i>
Engaging with Others	<p>Delivery of effective services through ongoing collaboration and partnership maximising NIJAC’s opportunity to influence.</p> <hr/> <p>Increased awareness of the story of NIJAC.</p>	<p>Review, develop and implement new SLA with partner organisations.</p> <p>The identification and development of new engagement methods and networks to attract wider applicant pools for existing and new recruitment schemes.</p> <p>Agree and publish a five-year strategic framework for Engagement 2025-30.</p> <p>Implementation of an annual Engagement & Communications Workplan 2025-26.</p> <hr/> <p>Implement Project ‘20 in 25’.</p>	<p>By September 2025.</p> <p>To be delivered throughout 2025-26.</p> <p>By May 2025.</p> <p>By March 2026.</p> <hr/> <p>By December 2025.</p>

Theme	Outcomes <i>(Description of intended impact)</i>	Actions <i>(How we will achieve our outcomes)</i>	Measures <i>(How we will measure success)</i>
Valuing our People	People are fully engaged in their work in terms of their skills and levels of motivation towards maintaining a positive culture to meet NIJAC's business outcomes.	<p>Agree a Learning and Development Framework that builds the capacity of our people (Commissioners, staff and co-opted individuals) with the specific skills and knowledge to carry out their roles.</p> <hr/> <p>Produce a fully costed Learning and Development Plan for 2025-26.</p> <hr/> <p>Further embed value-based Collective Leadership within the organisation to include equipping managers and staff with the skills to enrich job roles and maximise motivation.</p>	<p>By 30 September 2025.</p> <hr/> <p>By 30 June 2025.</p> <hr/> <p>Staff feedback collated by February 2026.</p>

Theme	Outcomes <i>(Description of intended impact)</i>	Actions <i>(How we will achieve our outcomes)</i>	Measures <i>(How we will measure success)</i>
Delivering a well-run organisation	<p>NIJAC has a strong culture of good governance, accountability and financial stability that supports NIJAC's values.</p>	<p>Work with TEO to develop new Partnership Agreement for 2025-2028.</p> <hr/> <p>Establish Accommodation Project jointly with TEO to produce draft recommendations.</p> <hr/> <p>Work with TEO to ensure Opening Budget allocation 2025-26 covers Core financial requirements.</p> <p>Work with TEO to ensure indicative Opening Budget Allocations for the three-year budget period 2026-27 to 2028-29 cover Core financial requirements.</p>	<p>Partnership Agreement in place by 30 June 2025.</p> <p>Achievement of requirements of Annual Engagement Plan in Partnership Agreement by 31 March 2026.</p> <hr/> <p>By March 2026.</p> <hr/> <p>By 1 April 2025.</p> <p>By 31 March 2026.</p>

Theme	Outcomes <i>(Description of intended impact)</i>	Actions <i>(How we will achieve our outcomes)</i>	Measures <i>(How we will measure success)</i>
Delivering a well-run organisation (continued)		<p>Submit in-year bids to TEO for additional funding for initiatives and projects during the year.</p> <hr/> <p>Undertake an externally facilitated review of NIJAC Board Effectiveness and implement recommendations.</p> <hr/> <p>Implement Year 1 targets from Diversity Mark Action Plan</p> <p>Develop a NIJAC Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) Strategy.</p> <p>Submit evidence to Diversity Mark to support reaccreditation.</p> <hr/>	<p>In line with TEO monitoring timetable.</p> <hr/> <p>By March 2026.</p> <hr/> <p>By 30 September 2025.</p> <p>By 30 November 2025.</p> <p>By 31 March 2026.</p> <hr/>

Theme	Outcomes <i>(Description of intended impact)</i>	Actions <i>(How we will achieve our outcomes)</i>	Measures <i>(How we will measure success)</i>
Delivering a well-run organisation (continued)		<p>Ensure NIJAC is meeting its responsibilities under the Code of Practice on the Management of Records.</p> <hr/> <p>Implement the recommendations of the UKGDPR Review by Internal Auditors.</p> <hr/>	<p>Review and implement requirements by 31 March 2026.</p> <hr/> <p>In line with date agreed by ARAC.</p> <hr/>