

# Case Study

## Department of the Environment

» This is the first time the organisation has had an information tool such as the Workforce Models which can generate indicative staffing numbers and grades for the processing of different categories and volumes of planning applications «

Chief Planning Officer, Department of the Environment, Northern Ireland



### The customer

The Planning & Local Government Group (P&LGG) contributes to and is responsible for implementing Northern Ireland Executive's planning policies and operates within a statutory framework. The Department's mission, to which the Group contributes, is to "make Northern Ireland a better place to live, work and invest". The Group consists of four divisions, three of which are responsible for functions relating to planning. The key business areas of P&LGG are development planning and development management, including enforcement. The Planning function currently has approximately 450 staff which includes approximately 20 staff currently on loan or secondment.

### The challenge

The Department was faced with a number of challenges including budget constraints and overspending as well as staff surplus. Despite a decrease in planning application numbers staff numbers remained constant.

In addition to the budget challenges, the Department of the Environment was charged by the Public Accounts Committee to prepare a staffing model for delivery of planning services, in the context of the transfer of planning functions to local government under the Review of Public Administration (RPA) reforms which is due to take place in April 2015.

A major review of planning fees is underway and the outputs from the Workforce Models will help inform decisions.

*"The models will also be used in the context of local government reform in Northern Ireland to inform decisions around allocations of Planning staff to newly formed local councils which will assume responsibility for planning post April 2015,"* says the Chief Planning Officer, DoE.

### The solution

Fujitsu's Business Consultants, in partnership with key stakeholders from the Planning Teams ran a series of workshops to collect information on the current target operating model and business processes for the different planning functions.

#### THE CUSTOMER

Country: Northern Ireland  
Industry: Public Sector  
Website: [www.doeni.gov.uk](http://www.doeni.gov.uk)

#### THE CHALLENGE

Public spending is under scrutiny and departments are under pressure to ensure that they are making efficient use of their budgets. The Department of the Environment (DoE) needed to transfer planning functions to local government under the Local Government reform and rationalise staff and resources to ensure the target operating model is fit for purpose under the transfer to local government.

#### THE SOLUTION

Fujitsu developed a set of workforce models that provided P&LGG with a flexible modelling tool that could be adapted to run alternative scenarios in terms of application numbers, application type and alternative staffing profiles.

#### THE BENEFIT

- The department now have a set of tools that supports local government reform changes and helps inform process improvement
- The workforce models also support strategic decision making within the department

Using this data Fujitsu combined its experience in organisation design and manpower modelling to develop a series of manpower models that can react to changes in working structures both by role, grade and task.

*"The model is also user friendly and can be adapted to reflect changes in support time, non-productive time, process steps and workload volumes,"* comments a Senior Business Partner with Responsibility for Planning.

There was no such a thing as a "standard application" - development sites vary enormously in character and planning context; proposed developments themselves vary in scale, form and use and the requirements of development plans also vary according to geography.

In general, case officer time is proportionate to the complexity and/or size of a development proposal. Case loading also needs to be viewed in the context of the quality of decision and improving the service for applicants.

*"The Workforce Models provide indicative staffing requirements for each Area Planning Office for a specified level of annual workload. The staffing of these offices can be revised based on the outputs from the models and appropriate resources redirected to address changes in local workloads,"* says the Senior Business Partner with Responsibility for Planning.

## Conclusion

The workforce models provided management a tool to support strategic decision making around rationalising staff numbers to ensure the correct number of staff were in place to deliver service.

Good practice guidelines have also introduced additional diligence into process. Although this has resulted in extra process time in some areas it has brought more rigour into process areas which will be beneficial in the longer term for the DoE.

It was essential that the Department and the new larger councils to be formed from 2015, had confidence in the output from these models and that the inputs are correct, particularly the processes and the weighting given to the complexity of particular types of applications.

*"The Models also informs the Senior Management Team about resources required to ensure that alleged breaches of planning legislation can be properly investigated,"* concludes The Chief Planning Officer.

Fujitsu has undertaken subsequent reviews of the manpower models to ensure the models are kept up to date with changing business practices.

## About Fujitsu

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