

Institute of Public Administration Strategic Plan 2017-2021



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Foreword

Welcome to the Institute of Public Administration's Strategic Plan 2017-2021. This plan, which builds on the success and achievements of previous plans, is being published at a time when Ireland is seeing signs of economic recovery. Since its establishment in 1957, the Institute has developed an excellent reputation both nationally and internationally for providing education, training, research, publishing and capacity-building services and support for public sector development and reform.

The public sector is in transition, affected by many internal and external factors. Crisis is now the new norm in this uncertain world - we daily read of climate change, the housing crisis, Brexit, political uncertainty, the debt crisis, Syria, refugees, cyberthreats. One may ask, what next? We now live in a VUCA world - a world of volatility, uncertainty, complexity and ambiguity. The modernisation of the public sector ensures leaner and smarter organisations and more efficient processes to meet today's societal challenges. The IPA offers a unique mix of services, making it the partner of choice for the public sector to achieve this transformation successfully.

The most significant challenge for the Institute over the lifetime of the previous strategic plan was managing a difficult budgetary situation.

Demand for services, including training, research and publishing, decreased. Demand for educational programmes was comparatively more stable. In overall terms the IPA's income reduced from almost €20 million in 2008 to just over €11 million in 2015. However, the Institute has continued to deliver a professional service to its key stakeholders, who have also experienced austerity measures.

The total number of people employed in the public service decreased from its peak of 320,000 in 2008 to 294,000 in 2015, a drop of 8 per cent. Though numbers employed have risen slightly since 2015, the overall reduction in numbers employed has resulted in a smaller public service, at a time of a growing population and growing demand for services. New requirements are arising from new developments across the public sector. The wave of public sector reforms is characterised by consolidation and re-centralisation. There is an emphasis on control of spending, the need to do more with less, joined-up government, closer integration of policy formulation and implementation, more flexible public service labour markets, greater use of technology, building and maintaining trust in public institutions, and accountability. There is a need to further develop skills in such areas as governance, leadership, management, communication, project management and human resource management. There is a significant focus on the professionalisation of the public sector.

The IPA is privileged to have a highly talented, professional and committed staff, and a strong body of associates. They are vitally important in delivering on our mission and vision. We are



committed to supporting our staff in their professional and personal development so as to allow them to excel in their work and deliver on our strategic priorities and objectives.

The Strategic Plan 2017-2021 sets out the IPA's mission, vision, values, strategic priorities and outcomes to the end of 2021.

We would like to acknowledge all those involved in contributing, shaping and developing this plan. We look forward to working with the IPA Board and all our staff, students and stakeholders in delivering an exciting future for the Institute.



Dr. Marian O'Sullivan

Dr Marian O'Sullivan
Director General



Martin O'Halloran

Mr Martin O'Halloran
Chairman

Who We Are and What We Do

Established in 1957, the IPA is Ireland's leading public sector development agency. We provide a unique mix of education, training, research, publishing and consultancy services for students and organisations across the public service. This cross-sectoral approach ensures the IPA applies a unique, whole-of-government perspective to everything we do.

We also provide services for the community and voluntary sector, where they interact with government, and for private sector clients wishing to gain a better understanding of the state, its role in Irish society, and public administration.

The IPA takes great pride in being a flexible and responsive organisation. We adapt our programmes and services to the needs of our clients. For example, through a blended-learning approach we provide educational courses at evenings and weekends and through distance learning. We also provide tailored, in-house training courses.

The Institute also acts as a forum for discussion and debate on public service reform across both central and local government levels. Through services such as our Governance Forum, conferences, seminars, publications and international work, we promote dialogue on the development and future direction of our public services.

Drawing on our research expertise in public administration, and the practical skill base of our staff and associates, we design and deliver programmes to improve the capacity of those working in, and with an interest in, public services. Our work is informed by a detailed understanding of public administration and how it works, both in Ireland and internationally.

Our services

The Whitaker School of Government and Management brings the IPA's education, library, publishing and research activities together and offers seventy nationally accredited qualifications. The School provides a wide range of part-time third-level programmes in, among other areas, public management, local government, healthcare management, policy analysis, governance, human resource management, human rights, finance and business studies. Degrees through to doctorate level, as well as diploma and certificate programmes, are offered through distance education or through lectures at the Institute's Lansdowne Road campus. As the leading provider of academic and professional development programmes for public servants, the School is in a unique position to design and deliver programmes that both respond to the specific needs of those employed in the wider public service and enhance the analysis and formulation of public policymaking.

The Institute is Ireland's only dedicated public management research resource. It offers a research service aimed at enhancing our understanding of the public service and how it works. It delivers evidence-based research papers, working closely with clients to identify problems

and achieve informed solutions that make a difference. The Institute is also the only Irish publisher specialising in texts on public administration and management. Its books and periodicals provide information on, and analysis of, policy areas that are of interest to public servants and to students of public administration and management.

The Institute provides an extensive range of training and development programmes and consultancy services. A wide variety of short-term and professional courses are provided each year in the Institute's training and education centre in Dublin, in regional or client venues, and internationally. Programmes cover such topics as leadership, management, personal effectiveness, business planning, public finance and accounting, corporate governance, human resource management and information systems, as well as sector-specific programmes; for example, local government, health services and the civil service. A number of our training programmes are accredited by outside agencies, including the Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy, the Chartered Institute of Personnel & Development and the Mediators' Institute of Ireland.



Review of Strategy 2011–2016

For the period of the Institute's previous strategy (2011-2016), our environment changed significantly with the economic downturn. This presented the Board, management and staff with significant challenges. The implementation of the strategy was punctuated by considerable regrouping, restructuring and redeployment. One of the key achievements of this period was our ability to maintain our service offerings while ensuring our financial survival and viability.

Our strategic objectives for the period 2011-2016, and some associated notable achievements, were as follows:

Develop a professional cadre of public servants based on recognised, high-quality accreditation

The Whitaker School of Government and Management currently delivers over seventy accredited programmes, ranging from undergraduate certificate level through every level up to postgraduate doctorate level. A number of new key programmes were developed during this period, including an MSc in Business and Management, a Professional Diploma in Official Statistics for Policy Evaluation (with the Central Statistics Office), a Professional Diploma in Human Rights and Equality, and a Professional Certificate in Governance.

The Board approved a strategic alliance with UCD whereby the Institute became a recognised college of the university.

Contribute to the development of Irish public administration through relevant research and publishing, and by stimulating debate and dialogue

We developed a new 'State of the Public Service' research series of papers. This initiative tracks public service transformation and provides an evidence-informed perspective on public service change. Seventeen papers were produced from 2011 to 2016. A 'Local Government' research series was also developed, which deals with various aspects of the efficiency and reform agenda in that sector. Twelve papers were produced between 2011 and 2016.



Other significant successes include our governance and risk management services.

In 2015 we moved the *Administration* journal to an open-access, online platform in an agreement with De Gruyter Open, and in 2016 the journal was successfully evaluated for inclusion in Scopus. On the occasion of the publication's fiftieth anniversary in 2015, our *Administration Yearbook & Diary* was relaunched as *Ireland - A Directory*.

Provide flexible and practical support for change and development across the whole of the public service

We very successfully placed a significant emphasis during the previous strategy on developing leadership programmes and profiling our expertise generally in the area of leadership/management. In this context the Leadership Challenge Programme for senior public servants, delivered with faculty from the University of Warwick (previously with staff from the John F. Kennedy School of Government at Harvard University), and the Leadership in Local Government Programme have been very successful.

Other significant successes include our governance and risk management services. We were central to the promotion of the new *Code of Practice for the Governance of State Bodies* (2016), and our Governance Forum experienced sizeable growth during the period.

3.

Strategy Context

The Institute's Strategic Plan 2017-2021 was prepared against the backdrop of significant economic, social, demographic, technological and environmental change. An improving economic outlook is emerging, and growth is projected to continue for the next few years. However, the overall outlook remains uncertain, with the potential impact of Brexit and other international economic and social developments suggesting a strong sense of caution is necessary when looking forward from a business perspective.

Demographic changes are set to have a significant impact on Institute services. A growing and ageing population will present many new challenges for public services. Within the public sector, an ageing workforce, increasing numbers of retirements and consequent need for new appointments at all levels will drive a need for new staff development interventions. Technological developments and increasing digitalisation of services will also be important drivers of change.

The Institute is operating in an increasingly complex competitive environment. Reliant primarily on funding provided through fees for services, the Institute is under constant pressure to deliver innovative, quality programmes which offer value for money. Increasing commissioning of services and price pressures in particular are notable features affecting the Institute.

The following sections further outline some of the main issues facing the public sector that will impact on the work of the Institute, and how we will deliver on our mission and vision.

Public service reform

Since the preparation of the last strategic plan, there have been major changes in the public service in Ireland, driven to a large extent by the impact of the global financial crisis. There have been unprecedented reductions in public service numbers and pay. Though numbers employed have risen slightly since 2015, the overall reduction in numbers employed in recent times has resulted in a smaller public service at a time of a growing population and growing demand for services.



The Institute maintained its presence in international markets with a number of new international programmes.

Develop international activities and profile for the whole of the Institute

The Institute maintained its presence in international markets with a number of new international programmes - for example, in China and the Seychelles - and a major consultancy project in Cyprus.

We also hosted a number of high-profile study visits of senior public servants from a range of different countries, including countries from Asia and Eastern Europe.

Maintain and further develop the IPA as an efficient and financially viable organisation, foster innovation, and develop our people and organisational capacity

The difficult economic and business environment presented a significant financial challenge over the past few years. To address the downturn in revenue, we targeted significant cost savings with a 27 per cent reduction in pay costs and a 55 per cent reduction in non-pay costs over the period.

We continued to invest in our staff and infrastructure during this period, with a number of staff graduating to masters and doctorate level, and the roll-out of a new high-specification student record system and a new suite of digital learning facilities.

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A growing and ageing population will present many new challenges for public services.



In November 2011 the government published the *Public Service Reform Plan*, a blueprint for public service reform up to 2015. This plan identified five priorities: customer service; maximising new and innovative service-delivery channels; radically reducing costs to drive better value for money; leading, organising and working in new ways; and a focus on implementation and delivery. Issues such as the development of shared services, procurement and outsourcing were emphasised.

In January 2014 the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform announced a successor to

this plan. The *Public Service Reform Plan 2014-2016* identified four main reform themes: delivery of improved outcomes, reform dividend (using savings to invest in new or improved services), digitisation/ open data, and openness and accountability. A further public service reform plan will be published in 2017.

The changing role and functions of the public service, combined with a changing personnel profile, provide the context within which capacity and competency requirements across the public service evolve. There will be more commissioning and contracting of

services and greater use of shared services. The use of more open recruitment and more specialisation and professionalisation in the public service is likely to continue. With regard to competencies and skills, there is an increasing trend to move away from the more generalist public servant working in a relatively closed environment to more use of specialist staff. However, at the same time, traditional competencies and skills in areas such as policy analysis, legislation and human resource management are being re-emphasised.

Central government reform

At central government level, the *Civil Service Renewal Plan* was published in October 2014. This plan sets out changes to accountability and performance regimes. It also identifies as one of its actions the establishment of a new shared model for delivering learning and development. In 2015 a *Corporate Governance Standard for the Civil Service* was published. Two significant initiatives in 2016 were the piloting of a new model for conducting organisational capability reviews in the civil service, and the updating of risk management guidance for government departments and offices.

Within the central government sector, including both government departments and their agencies, new capacity is required to address the challenges facing the sector. The role of the state in Irish society is changing, with more of a focus on an enabling, evaluative and innovative state. Capacity in areas such as governance, implementation, coordination and performance management needs to be further developed.

Health services reform – Building a better health service

The Programme for Health Service Improvement seeks to embed sustainable change right across the system, radically change culture and redefine relationships.

The health service has a workforce of over 100,000 staff delivering care across the country, 365 days a year. The *People Strategy 2015-2018* was developed in recognition of the vital role that the workforce plays in delivering safer, better healthcare. The strategy extends to the entire health sector workforce. It underpins the vision for healthcare as set out in the *Health Service Executive Corporate Plan 2015-2017* and the Programme for Health Service Improvement. The *People Strategy* was developed through engagement sessions with staff and stakeholders from all parts of the health system, and is focused on providing a cohesive framework to lead, manage and develop the contribution of all staff in an environment that is conducive to learning and well-being. It is also focused on the future needs of the service, to attract and retain high-calibre staff, and it is underpinned by values of care, compassion, trust and learning. The *People Strategy* sets out eight people management priorities: leadership and culture, staff engagement, learning and development, workforce planning, evidence and knowledge, performance, partnering, and human resource professional services. Addressing these priorities is intended to improve performance, optimise the health service workforce and foster the development of a culture of continuous learning and improvement.

Local government reform

The guiding framework for local government reform is provided by *Putting People First: Action Programme for Effective Local Government*, published in 2012. This places great emphasis on local government as the main means of governance and public service at local level. City/county councils in Limerick, Tipperary, and Waterford have been merged; eighty town councils have been abolished, replaced by a new system of municipal districts; and a National Oversight and Audit Commission has been established. As with central

government, issues such as shared services and procurement have become more of a feature of the landscape.

Within the local government sector, local leadership of actions that involve a diversity of organisations (national, local, public, private, civil society) across a range of activities from social and economic development to housing will bring new challenges. Critical sectoral capacity issues include getting things done through others, innovation and change management, resource management and managing the political dimension.



The Institute engaged in an intensive consultation exercise with our main stakeholders during the development of this strategy (see Appendix 1). Particular themes which emerged were as follows:

- The Institute has a unique selling point of working across and understanding the whole of the public sector;
- The vision for the Institute needs to be ambitious and future-oriented;
- The Institute is important for the personal and professional development of staff;
- The Institute should act as a think tank for the public service;
- The Institute should identify itself as being practice-led and research-informed;
- The Institute provides excellent value for money;
- The Institute should highlight its key attributes of flexibility and responsiveness;
- The marketing of the Institute and its services needs to be improved;
- The Institute should make more use of its alumni;
- The Institute needs to constantly review programmes to ensure they are fit for purpose.



The reform agenda, consultative process and other issues highlighted here provide a backdrop for our strategy in that they suggest opportunities and challenges facing the Institute. The main opportunities include the following:

- To inform the development of the reform agenda through our services;
- To build on our position as a 'key provider of choice' to the wider public service;
- To differentiate ourselves from competition by highlighting our whole-of-government remit, combining practice-led and research-informed services;
- To align our services with new learning and development models emerging at central and local government levels;
- To identify and target current and potential new users of our services for continuous professional development;
- To partner with professional accreditation bodies for IPA training programme accreditation;
- The Quality and Qualifications Ireland (QQI) review of our accredited programmes and our quality assurance (QA) processes;
- Our review of the IPA-UCD relationship, and the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform's periodic review of the IPA as required under the *Code of Practice for the Governance of State Bodies*.



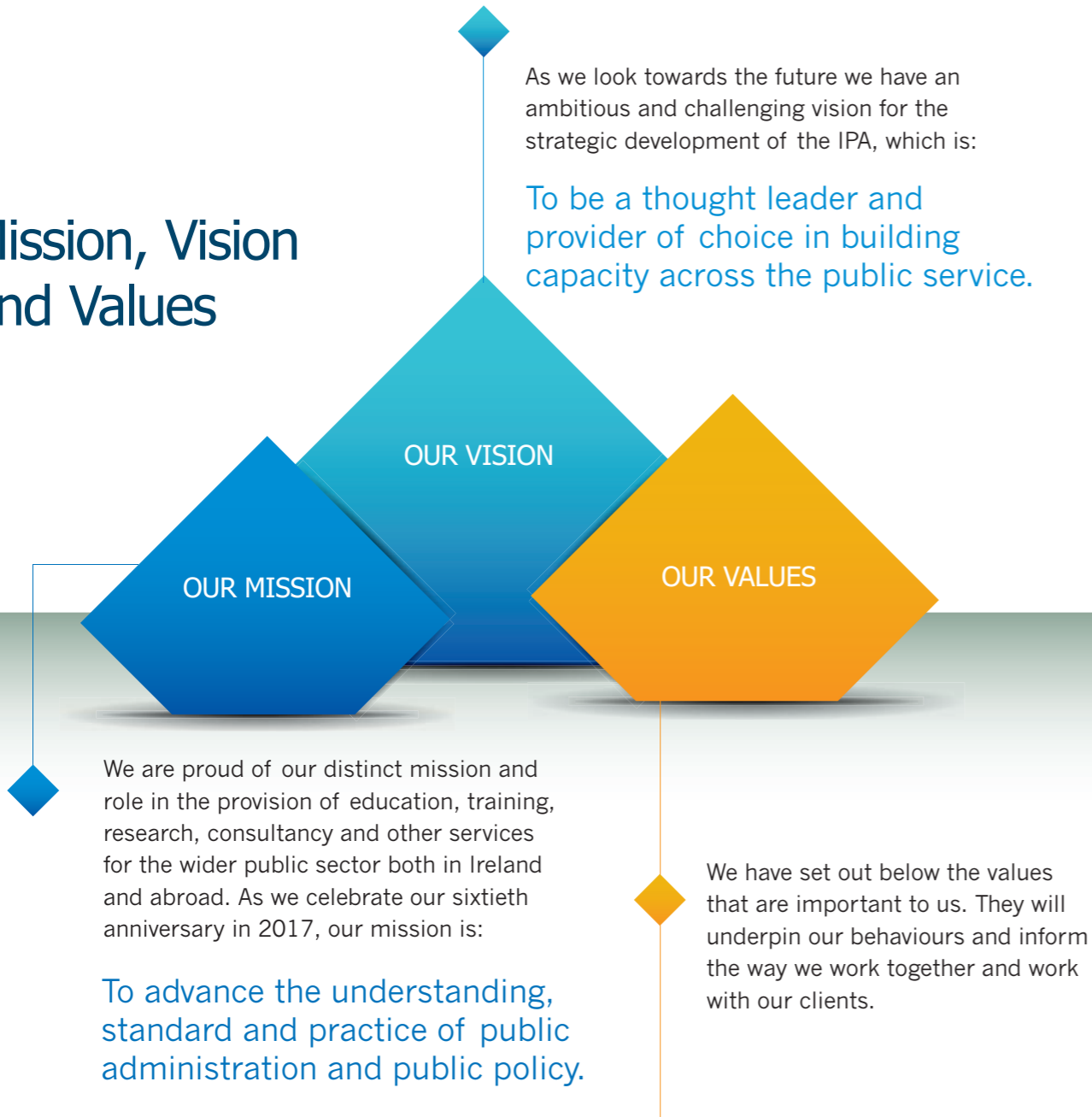
The main challenges include the following:

- The changing marketplace, with more commissioning for service provision and more diverse competition;
- Potential competitive and pricing implications of new models of learning and development;
- Effective marketing and promotion of who we are and what we do;
- Controlling our tendency to respond to all requests, and the consequent need to focus our resources;
- Preparing for the IPA 'retirement bubble' and building the resources, skills and diversity we need for the future;
- Our physical infrastructure - does it send the signal of a modern, 'state of the art' learning environment?

These opportunities and challenges in turn inform our strategic priorities, as set out later in this document.

4.

Mission, Vision and Values



- **Integrity:** To be honest, sincere and ethical in our dealings with one another and with clients;
- **Client-centred and responsive:** To act efficiently and effectively in the best interests of the client and in meeting their needs;
- **Openness and accountability:** To act and to take decisions in a transparent manner and be open to scrutiny;
- **Trust and respect:** To ensure we are trustworthy both to clients and to colleagues and those with whom we come in contact;
- **Innovation and learning:** To always strive for new ideas, best solutions and the acquisition and dissemination of new knowledge;
- **Research-informed:** To have due regard to available and evidence-based research in our decision-making and in the services we provide;
- **Practice-led:** To pursue good practice and facilitate practitioner knowledge; insight and experience to be shared and implemented across the public service.

5.

Strategic Outcomes, Priorities and Objectives

The IPA's mission is to advance the understanding, standard and practice of public administration and public policy. We have identified a number of strategic outcomes which will support our overall purpose. These outcomes will be measured through a range of quantitative and qualitative measures.



1

STRATEGIC PRIORITY

Provide relevant, flexible, practice-led, research-informed services and products aligned with current and emerging needs in the public service



Objectives

- a) Provide high-quality, cost-effective services and products which respect the needs of clients
- b) Provide flexible and responsive services, accessible across the public service, which facilitate a balance between work, life and learning
- c) Inform discussion, debate and practice on the current and future direction of the public service
- d) Provide opportunity for progression on accredited pathways and for continuous professional development
- e) To develop further a QA regime to establish, maintain and enhance the quality of our accredited education programmes in line with university requirements



Indicative actions for our annual business plans

- Align our activities with all public service learning and development models;
- Complete the institutional review process required by the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform;
- Conduct service cost analysis, tender analysis and competitor analysis, and review quarterly.
- Adapt our programme and training delivery models to meet emerging needs;
- As needed, form partnerships to bid for and deliver products and services;
- Revise our current portfolio of education, training, advisory and support services in the light of trends and emerging needs.
- Develop public service observatory function;
- Promote IPA publications and *Administration* journal to a wider audience;
- Use IPA forums and networks to promote new thinking and best practice.
- Review operation of IPA-UCD partnership;
- Update our policies and procedures on access, transfer and progression;
- Develop links with professional bodies to enhance routes to professional accreditation of learning.
- Enhance our QA framework and revise existing QA policies and procedures in line with national and European requirements;
- Secure approval for revised QA processes in line with QQI requirements;
- Publish approved QA policies and procedures on IPA website;
- Review effectiveness of the implementation of QA policies and procedures in line with QQI requirements.

2

STRATEGIC PRIORITY

Provide a progressive organisational environment, resourced to deliver quality and excellence



Objectives

- a) Develop our human resources strategy to target current and future capacity and capability requirements
- b) Support an environment which promotes and embeds our strategy and shared values
- c) Maintain and enhance the IPA as a financially viable organisation
- d) Enhance the client and staff experience



Indicative actions for our annual business plans

- Agree and implement revised organisation structure to support flexible and responsive delivery of services;
- Review internal capacity to achieve corporate objectives, including the use of an associate model;
- Implement staff resourcing, staff development and staff succession plans;
- Develop strategic human resources plan.
- Ensure organisation-wide engagement with strategy through allocation of responsibilities/accountability underpinned by effective performance management;
- Implement formal communication mechanisms to improve cross-organisation communication, and enable greater understanding and integrated working.
- Prepare and monitor business plans;
- Prepare and monitor product income and services costs;
- Maintain monthly/quarterly reviews of management accounts;
- Maintain high governance standards reflected in taking action on the gap analysis with 2016 governance code and Comptroller & Auditor General audit.
- Prepare three-year rolling infrastructure plan;
- Develop and launch new IT services for staff and clients;
- Develop IPA longer-term campus plan.

3

STRATEGIC PRIORITY

Actively promote and position the IPA as a key provider of choice for the wider public service

Objectives

- a) Develop a marketing and communications strategy
- b) Develop a stakeholder engagement strategy
- c) Increase the strategic visibility and profile of the IPA and its staff

Indicative actions for our annual business plans

- Target our core market, document our 'value add' and our 'differentiators' from competition, e.g. our products/services and how we deliver them to clients;
- Develop a unified brand and implement consistently across the organisation;
- Develop a communications strategy to support the promotion of IPA activities;
- Agree our marketing channels, e.g. website, social media, print media.
- Coordinate processes by which the IPA currently engages stakeholders, e.g. corporate members, committees, board members, students, alumni;
- Further develop opportunities to provide a safe networking environment for stakeholders to debate and share experience and best practice;
- Establish an IPA alumni network.
- Actively look for speaking, networking and related opportunities to forge new relationships and raise the profile of the IPA;
- Deliver a programme of sectoral events - seminars/conferences;
- Deliver an events programme to mark sixtieth anniversary of the IPA.

6.

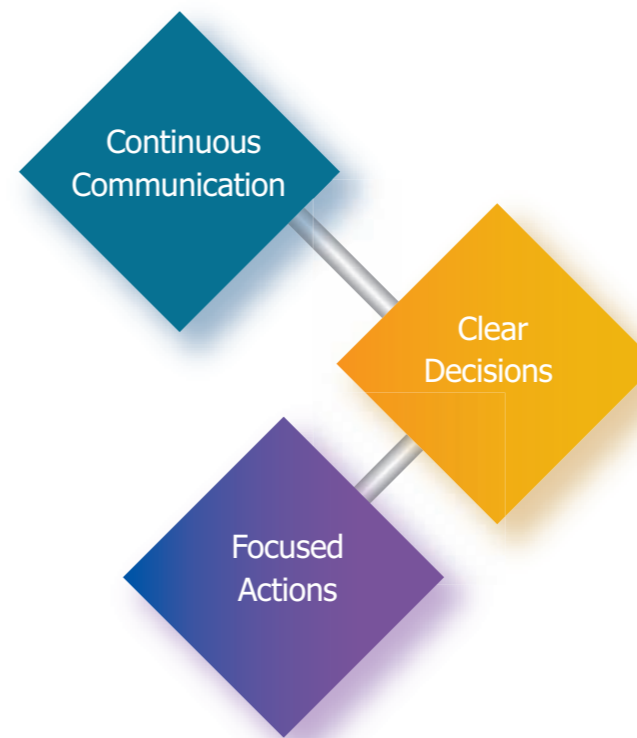
Delivering on Strategy and Measuring Our Performance

The IPA will adopt an agile and adaptive approach to strategic planning and to the development of a strategic implementation framework. In order to successfully continue to foster understanding and ownership of our strategy by all staff, there will be continuous communication and ongoing engagement with staff. In implementing the strategy, clear decisions and focused actions will be agreed with the Senior Management Group.

The structure, skills set and capacity within the IPA will be reviewed so as to enable us to align the organisation with the delivery of the strategy. This approach recognises the ever-changing landscape and the emergent nature of challenges that we will face in the next five years. The strategic plan does not set out to detail and address every step that the IPA will take over the duration of the plan. The plan identifies top-level priorities, objectives and actions. This will focus the direction of the Institute as all staff pursue their various and distinct activities.

The Senior Management Group will be responsible for development of a detailed business plan, which will contain actions and key performance indicators (KPIs), as well as timelines and measurable targets. This plan will be subject to updates and revisions on an annual basis following a review phase. Progress on the actions and KPIs will be reviewed by the Senior Management Group on a quarterly basis. The Director General and Senior Management Group will report to the Board as part of their monitoring and reviewing of the plan.

At the end of the five-year period of the plan, the Senior Management Group will complete an end-of-plan review and present a strategic plan close-out report for adoption by the IPA's Board.



Appendix 1: Consultation

As part of the development process of our new corporate strategy, we conducted a consultation process on the draft plan. We received feedback from fifty-five organisations, which included government departments, local authorities, commercial and non-commercial semi-state bodies, higher education institutions, regulatory agencies, registered students and graduates.

Feedback was received by email and by phone call. The feedback supported the broad objectives of the plan and the strategic priorities that will need to be addressed over the next five years. The consultation exercise helped us refine and strengthen the strategic plan.

The IPA is very appreciative of the time and attention given by everyone who provided feedback, and would like to express its thanks to all those who responded to the consultation process on our draft strategy.

