



# STRATEGIC PLAN 2024 - 2027



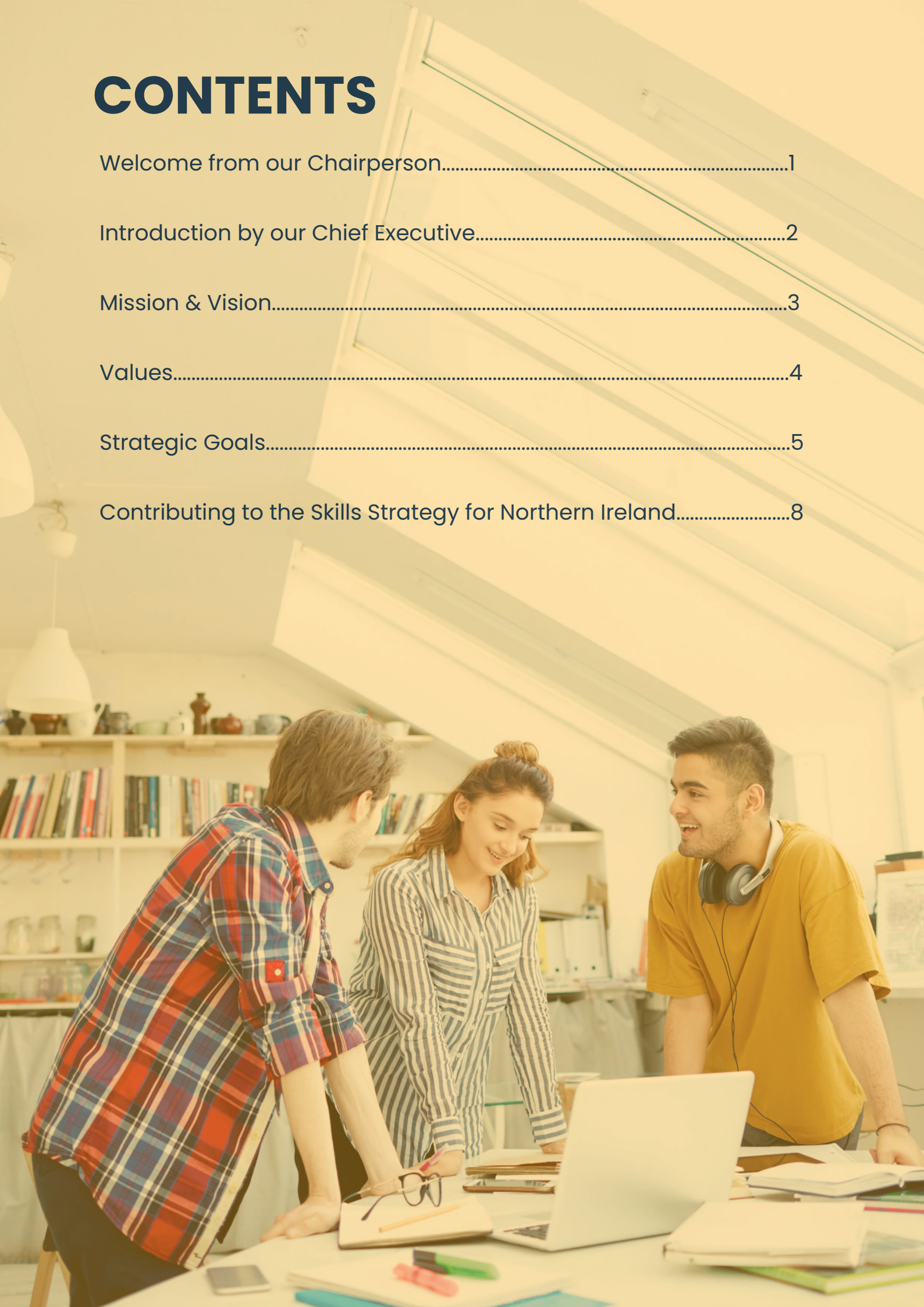
A young man with short dark hair, wearing a light-colored jacket over a white t-shirt and dark pants, stands in a library. He is holding an open book in front of him with both hands. The background shows tall bookshelves filled with books. The lighting is soft and focused on the man, with a blueish tint overall.

**“ Education is about igniting curiosity, fostering growth, and empowering individuals to shape a brighter, more impactful tomorrow. ”**

*Martin Flynn, CEO*

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# Welcome from our Chairperson

I am delighted to present the Open College Network Northern Ireland's (OCN NI) three-year strategic plan. This plan has been developed with the purpose of ensuring that we continue to provide high-quality qualifications and services to our centres, learners, and other stakeholders.

OCN NI has been a leading provider of educational services in Northern Ireland for nearly 30 years, and we are committed to continuing to deliver excellence in the years to come. The strategic plan sets out our vision, mission, and values, as well as our key priorities and objectives for the next three years.

**Our mission is to develop and award qualifications which engage, enrich and equip learners for life. To achieve this mission, we have identified three strategic priorities:**

- 01** To be the awarding organisation of choice
- 02** To promote learning as a tool for transformation
- 03** To be innovative, creative and continuously improve

We have also set out specific objectives to achieve each of these priorities, and we will be working closely with our centres and stakeholders to deliver on these objectives.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank all of our centres and stakeholders for their ongoing support and partnership with OCN NI. We look forward to working together to deliver on our new strategic plan and to continue to provide high-quality qualifications and services to learners across Northern Ireland.

Paul Donaghy, Chairperson





# Introduction by our Chief Executive

I am thrilled to present to you Open College Network Northern Ireland's 3-year strategic plan, which outlines our goals, priorities, and actions as we strive to continue our position as Northern Ireland's foremost Professional and Technical Awarding Organisation.

We have come a long way since our inception, and we are proud of the role we have played in shaping Northern Ireland's education and training landscape. With this strategic plan, we intend to build on the strong foundation that we have established to drive growth, innovation, and excellence.

The Northern Ireland 10x Skills Strategy, which was launched in 2021, aims to transform the skills landscape in Northern Ireland and position the region as a leader in skills development. The strategy sets out three strategic goals which, cumulatively, aim to address the skills imbalances in our economy and improve social inclusion and wellbeing across our society. OCN NI is fully committed to supporting these goals.

As the leading provider of professional and technical qualifications in Northern Ireland, we recognise the importance of skills development in driving economic growth and promoting social mobility. We are committed to working closely with employers, educational institutions, and other stakeholders to deliver high-quality qualifications and services that meet the changing needs of learners and employers.

I am confident that with the right focus and efforts, we can achieve our goals and build a stronger, more resilient Open College Network in Northern Ireland. I am excited to work with our talented team, the Board, and our partners to bring this strategic plan to life and make a positive impact in Northern Ireland.

Together, we can achieve great things.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Martin Flynn".

Martin Flynn, Chief Executive



## **MISSION**

*To develop and award qualifications which engage, enrich and equip learners for life.*



## **VISION**

*A successful, inclusive society where every learner matters.*





## VALUES

### LEARNER CENTRED



Everyone has the right to learn and develop throughout their lives and have that learning recognised and valued. We will enable individuals to achieve their aspirations by encouraging learner achievement through developing and supporting appropriate qualifications.

### RESPECT



Everyone is entitled to be valued equally and treated with dignity and respect. We will apply the highest standards of integrity in everything we do.

### EXCELLENCE



Everyone has the right to high-quality services which are accessible, valued and responsive to needs. We will hold ourselves to the highest standards of responsible business.

### COLLABORATION



The needs of learners are more effectively met by working closely together with our Centres and other stakeholders to seek collaborative partnerships.

# STRATEGIC GOALS

**STRATEGIC GOAL 1:  
To be the Awarding Body  
of Choice**

**STRATEGIC GOAL 2:  
To promote learning as a  
tool for transformation**

**STRATEGIC GOAL 3:  
To be innovative,  
creative and  
continuously improve**



## ***Strategic Goal 1: To be the Awarding Body of Choice***

### ***Customer Service***

**Aim 1.1:** To respond effectively to the needs and aspirations of our customers and other stakeholders in line with best practice.

### ***Organisational Excellence***

**Aim 1.2:** To foster a culture of continuous improvement and innovation, ensuring all aspects of the organisation are united in a collective dedication to efficiency, quality, and adaptability.

### ***Marketing and Communications***

**Aim 1.3:** To enhance brand visibility, communicate the value of our qualifications to relevant audiences; and foster stakeholder engagement.

## ***Strategic Goal 2: To promote learning as a tool for transformation***

### ***Advocacy***

**Aim 2.1:** To work in partnership to support learner progression and lifelong learning education and effectively contribute to public policy.

### ***Qualifications portfolio***

**Aim 2.2:** To develop new qualifications and update existing ones to align with industry standards, technological advancements, and societal changes.

### ***Engaging and empowering staff***

**Aim 2.3:** To create a workplace environment where every staff member is actively engaged, motivated, and empowered to contribute their best, driving individual and collective success.



## ***Strategic Goal 3: To be innovative, creative and continuously improve***

### ***Technological innovation***

**Aim 3.1:** To embed innovative use of technologies in everything we do to enhance and modernise the learning experience.

### ***Financial and physical resources***

**Aim 3.2:** To promote best practice in resource planning, management and reporting and effectively demonstrate value for money.

### ***Governance***

**Aim 3.3:** To establish and promote a governance framework that ensures transparency, accountability, inclusivity, and effectiveness in decision-making, fostering trust and enabling sustainable development.



# ***Contributing to the Skills Strategy for Northern Ireland***

The Northern Ireland 10X Skills Strategy, which was launched in 2021, aims to transform the skills landscape in Northern Ireland and position the region as a leader in skills development. It sets out three strategic goals which, cumulatively, aim to address the skills imbalances in our economy and improve social inclusion and wellbeing across our society. Open College Network Northern Ireland (OCN NI) is fully committed to supporting these goals.

OCN NI plays a crucial role in supporting and contributing to the NI Programme for Government and the Department for the Economy's 10X Skills Strategy. OCN NI is an organisation dedicated to providing high-quality and industry recognised qualifications to individuals in Northern Ireland.

One of the key ways in which OCN NI contributes to the NI Programme for Government is by facilitating the development, delivery and award of professional and technical qualifications. These qualifications are designed to meet the specific skills needs of the economy and industry sectors in Northern Ireland. By offering a wide range of professional and technical qualifications, OCN NI enables individuals to acquire the skills and knowledge necessary to succeed in their chosen career paths, thereby aligning with the government's goal of developing a skilled and competitive workforce.

OCN NI contributes directly to the 10X Skills Strategy of the Department for the Economy. The strategy aims to significantly increase the number of individuals with higher-level skills to drive economic growth and productivity. OCN NI supports this objective by providing accessible and flexible learning opportunities for individuals of all backgrounds and ages. OCN NI offers a variety of learning pathways, including apprenticeships, professional development courses, and accredited qualifications. By doing so, OCN NI helps individuals upskill or reskill, enhancing their employability and contributing to the development of a highly skilled workforce in Northern Ireland.

By working closely with key stakeholders, OCN NI ensures that its qualifications and training programmes are relevant, up to date, and aligned with the needs of the labour market. This collaborative approach strengthens the connection between education and employment, facilitating a smoother transition for individuals into the workforce and supporting the overall goals of the prioritisation of skills development to meet the economic vision for Northern Ireland.



# STRATEGIC PLAN 2024 – 2027



Web: [www.ocnni.org.uk](http://www.ocnni.org.uk)

Tel: 028 9046 3990

Email: [info@ocnni.org.uk](mailto:info@ocnni.org.uk)



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We invest in people Gold