



2024/25 Impact Report

Accelerating responsible AI adoption.
Building skills. Driving innovation.

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Transforming Potential Into Progress

2024/25 has been a year of establishing firm foundations and growth for the Artificial Intelligence Collaboration Centre (AICC).

We built a talented and diverse team at pace, drawing expertise from both industry and academia, with nineteen staff now in place across Belfast and Derry~Londonderry, greatly enhancing our ability to deliver.

Highlights include the roll-out of our Transformer Programme, with over 100 SMEs in our pipeline requesting support, the launch of Northern Ireland's first AI Capability Census, support for 260 postgraduate scholars and the introduction of new professional training programmes.

We've also convened flagship events such as AI Castle Conversations and taken Northern Ireland's AI story onto the global stage at Big Data New York and the Dublin Tech Summit.

With our mandate extended to 2029, we now have the certainty and runway to deliver transformational impact; building AI skills, supporting innovation and transforming businesses.

The year ahead presents even greater opportunity and we are already working on additional opportunities with strategic partners to augment our core activities. We will continue to scale our support, strengthen our ecosystem and ensure Northern Ireland is recognised as a leader in responsible and impactful AI.



David Crozier CBE,
Director, AICC



AICC's Progress at a Glance

Our mission is simple: to accelerate AI adoption, upskill the workforce, grow the talent pipeline and foster a thriving innovation ecosystem across Northern Ireland.

True progress isn't just measured in numbers, it's reflected in the confidence, capabilities and trust we help to build.

Since our launch in March 2024, and with full activity ramping up from November 2024, the AICC has delivered measurable results across all areas of activity. From upskilling students and professionals to accelerating SME adoption of AI, our progress is already shaping Northern Ireland's economic future.

These highlights show how far we've come in a short space of time and how much potential lies ahead.

Data reported as at 30 August 2025.



postgraduate scholars enrolled across QUB and UU, with 17 graduates in 2025



professionals enrolled onto our "Driving Value from AI" course



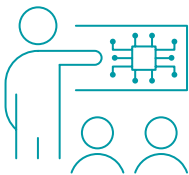
in new collaborative R&D projects secured



attendees at our AI Acceleration Tour workshops across the region



SME collaborations completed, 24 currently live and 66 onboarding



Milestones and Achievements

March 2024	Launch of the AICC
August 2024	AICC Director appointed
September 2024	First cohort of postgraduate scholars began their fully funded course
September 2024	Industry-led Advisory Board chaired by Kathryn Harkin constituted
November 2024	Recruitment ramped up to build AICC team
December 2024	New brand and website launched
February 2025	First AI Acceleration Tour Workshop took place
March 2025	AI Castle Conversation event convened key industry leaders and public sector officials shaping government policy
June 2025	First cohort of professionals onboarded to Driving Value from AI course
June 2025	AICC hosts the First and Deputy First Ministers for launch of new Office for AI and Digital
July 2025	17 AICC postgraduate scholars graduated
July 2025	ARTi, our AI-focused High-Performance Computing (HPC) node commissioned
August 2025	AI Capability Census published and launched by Economy Minister



Kathryn Harkin
Head of AI at FinTrU and
AICC Advisory Board Chair

Key Action 1: Operations

Behind every successful initiative is a strong foundation. The AICC has built robust operations, a talented team and a clear brand presence to drive its mission forward.

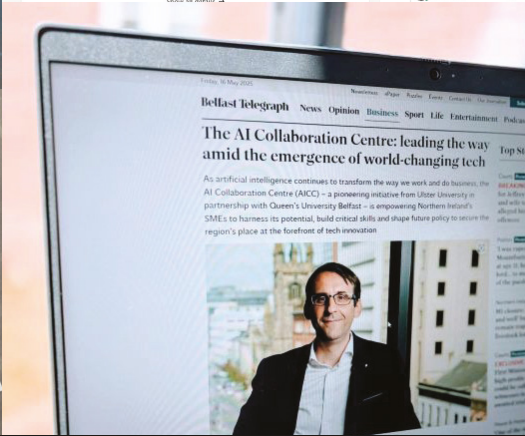
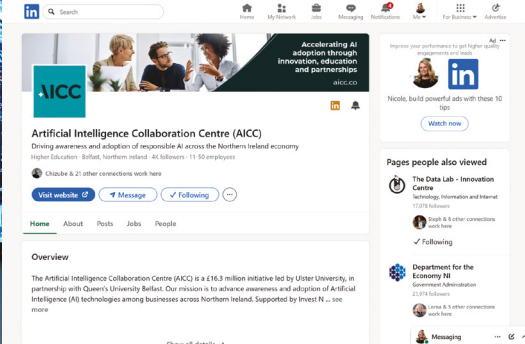
Our team grew to nineteen staff in 2024/25, with roles across Business Engagement, Operations, Professional Services, AI Technology and Ethics, Data Science and Research, located across Ulster University's Belfast and Derry~Londonderry campuses and Queen's University Belfast. We're proud to have achieved 38% female representation, exceeding UK benchmarks for AI and technology teams.



Over 3,600
LinkedIn followers,
building our online
community organically



The team has grown from
3 to 19 members





Key Action 2: Training and scholarships

Building AI skills is at the heart of our mission. In 2024/25, we scaled up both academic and professional training to ensure Northern Ireland has the talent it needs for the future.

Through our fully funded scholarships, 260 students have enrolled across Ulster University and Queen's University Belfast. The first 17 graduates completed their programmes in summer 2025, equipped to take AI knowledge into the workplace. Two new MScs have been launched, Ethical & Responsible AI at Ulster University and AI in Business at Queen's University.

Professional training has also grown rapidly. Our AI Acceleration Tour brought practical AI workshops to communities across Northern Ireland, attracting 269 participants. Meanwhile, 106 professionals enrolled in our "Driving Value from AI" course, with three-quarters completing, a remarkable outcome for a fully funded online programme.



“

I found the Driving Value from AI course really useful and it cemented some of the ideas I had like (1) I don't have to be a technical expert to participate in conversations, I need to bring my area of expertise to the table, (2) don't be afraid to ask questions to all people involved, (3) the regulatory changes that are coming in now align with what the experts delivering the course are saying about transparency etc. and that was comforting.

I found the aspects where we had to answer questions and could see other trainees' responses useful because it gave me a wider set of things to think about in terms of challenges they face and actual application of AI in businesses.

”

Driving Value from AI Participant



Key Action 3:

Ecosystem of collaboration and innovation

AI innovation doesn't happen in isolation. That's why the AICC is building a collaborative ecosystem, bringing together industry, academia, government and communities.

Events have been central to this effort, from the launch of our flagship AI Castle Conversations at Hillsborough Castle, which was supported by key industry partners, to national events such as Alan Turing Institute's AI UK 2025 and The Data Lab Scotland's DataFest. International showcases at Big Data New York and Dublin Tech Summit, and strategic partnerships, including with Innovate UK through BridgeAI. In total, we delivered 16 high-quality events, spanning local workshops to global stages, ensuring Northern Ireland remains part of the international AI conversation.





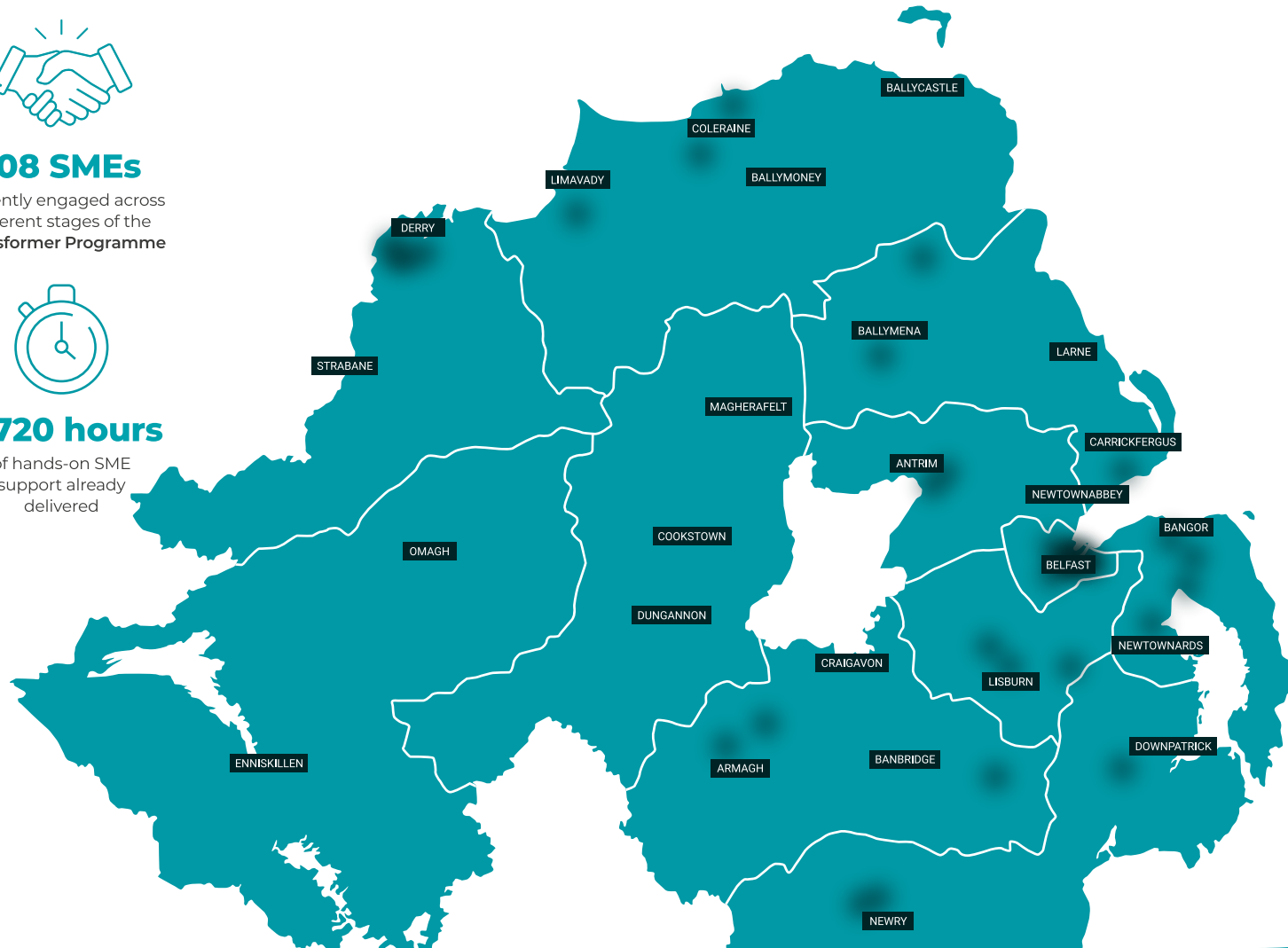
108 SMEs

currently engaged across different stages of the Transformer Programme



4,720 hours

of hands-on SME support already delivered



Key Action 4: Hands-on support for SMEs

Supporting indigenous SMEs is where the AICC makes a direct impact on increasing the region's productivity. Through our Transformer Programme, we provide up to 20 days of fully funded AI support from our in-house experts.

In 2024/25:

- ◆ 18 AI and data science projects were completed
- ◆ 24 projects were in development
- ◆ 66 businesses were onboarding

These projects span multiple industries including healthcare, construction, cyber security, food production and legal technology. Each engagement accelerates innovation, builds confidence and ensures AI adoption is ethical and responsible.



Working with the AI Collaboration Centre through the Transformer Programme has been a game-changer for us. The hands-on support helped unlock 20 years of project data, streamlining our workflows and saving up to 90% of the time spent issuing drawings.

Beyond the technical solution, the collaborative whiteboarding, weekly check-ins, and expert guidance opened our eyes to what's truly possible with AI. It's been a lighthouse project for our practice, and a glimpse into what the industry has to offer. ”

Rory McCormack, Digital Thinkers Lead, White Ink Architects

Key Action 5: Collaborative Research, Development and Innovation

Research and innovation are vital to making Northern Ireland a hub of AI excellence. The AICC has played a central role in securing and supporting collaborative R&D initiatives.



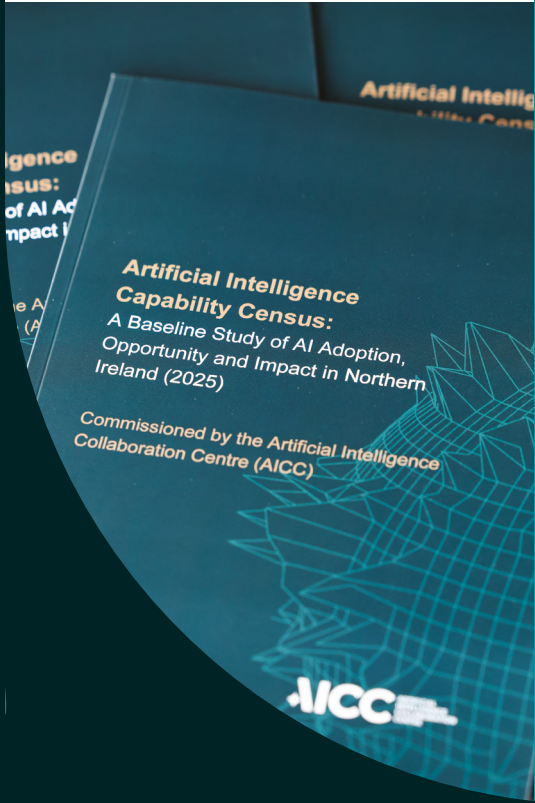
Major successes include:

- ◆ Peace+ programme – £5m allocated to Northern Ireland partners
- ◆ NILab doctoral training – £7m to train future AI researchers
- ◆ AI Security Institute – £200k funding secured

The publication of the AI Capability Census was a landmark achievement. It identified 198 firms active in AI, employing 1,340 professionals, and generating £82m GVA in 2024. With continued adoption, this could reach £200m by 2028. AICC has also collaborated on the new UK Artificial Intelligence sector study 2024 published by the Department for Science, Innovation & Technology (DSIT).



The AICC has become the **cornerstone of AI research** and innovation in Northern Ireland.



Looking Ahead

The next 12 months will see the AICC deepen its impact and expand its activities.

We will:

- ◆ Grow our research portfolio, building on R&D&I successes
- ◆ Host more community-building events such as AI Coffee Conversations
- ◆ Expand training provision through new courses and workshops
- ◆ Continue transforming SMEs through the Transformer Programme
- ◆ Drive the conversation on Responsible AI regionally and internationally
- ◆ Strengthen complimentary engagements with regional City Deal, cross-border and national AI initiatives

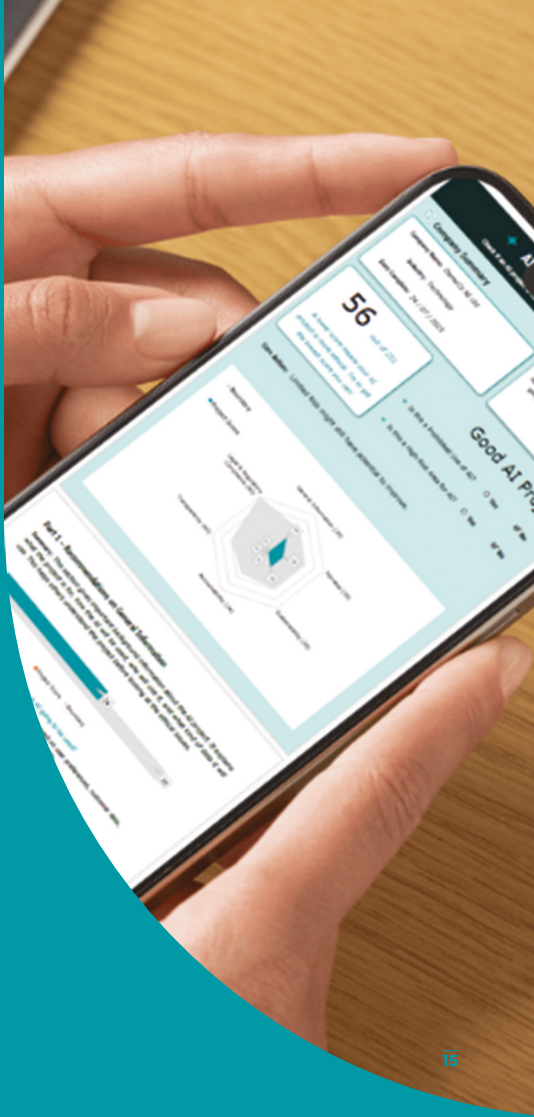
With our extension in place to August 2029, the AICC is firmly positioned to help Northern Ireland harness AI responsibly, ethically, and at scale.



Upcoming launch of dedicated **Responsible AI Hub** with practical tools to help businesses and individuals innovate ethically



Mandate extended to 2029, ensuring long-term impact





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