



Business Plan 2024 – 2025

Revised August 2024

Introduction

This revised annual plan sets out what we plan to deliver over the 2024/5 financial year. However, it should be noted that JABS is a demand led organisation and because of the evolving budget situation the number and scale of judicial competitions being sought by Scottish Government remains uncertain.

This plan identifies the actions that we'll take to achieve our objectives as set out in years one and two of our 2023– 2025 Corporate Plan as published in September 2023.

It will be reviewed at the assurance of governance Board meetings when the Board will monitor progress against the plan.

A key priority for the previous year was the consideration of our approach to diversity in every aspect of our work with the creation of the Diversity Action Plan. One focus this year will be on the work of the Judicial Diversity Reference Group. We will carefully consider the recommendations of the Group which should help enhance the structures and systems we have in place deliver fair, open and effective recruitment processes.

We will continue to review what we do, embedding a continuous improvement culture across the organisation both on an iterative basis through our competition work and through our Programme for Change. This is a major focus for the entire organisation. Our new lay appointment adviser will specifically focus on this area of work over the next 12 to 18 months. In addition to competition work, our new legal appointment adviser will assist the Board with research into a range of topics, particularly in relation to our legislative obligations. Both of these new resources will free up existing members of the BMU so that we can better target them on areas that need to be expanded to meet our strategic priorities; Wherever possible, we will look to technological solutions to help streamline our systems to make them as transparent and accessible to all candidates.

The Plan will ensure that we utilise our most important assets – our Board members, legal and lay appointment advisers, our staff in the Business Management Unit (BMU) and our relationships with our key stakeholders.

Under Schedule 1 Section 14(1) of the Judiciary and Courts (Scotland) Act 2008, 'The Scottish Ministers must provide, or ensure the provision of such staff, property and services as they consider the Board requires for the purpose of carrying out its functions.' A draft budget for the 2024/5 financial year, which will support this plan of work, has been shared with the Scottish Government.

JABS Priorities

Year 2

- Implement revisions to our operating model to make best use of the new resources available to JABS, in particular in the Scottish Tribunals competitions
- Continue to review our approach to outreach, applications and assessment as part of the Programme for Change
- Undertake survey research work to inform process improvements as part of the Programme for Change
- Continue with the development, with the SG and JO, a Joint planning approach to the timing and management of judicial appointment competitions, taking into account the new budgetary climate
- Work with key stakeholders to implement the diversity action plan for judicial appointments
- Undertake a programme of increased external engagement to further public knowledge of JABS and the judicial appointments process
- Develop a process for actively monitoring outputs, including the collection of statistical information to better inform approaches
- Carry out a review of staffing and resources in January 2025.

Actions

Appointments

- Take forward priority recruitment for 2024/25 including an second sheriff round as well as recruitment for the First-tier Tribunal for Scotland.
- Agree a protocol with the Lord President, the President of the Scottish Tribunals and Scottish Government for a planned programme of recruitment going forward.

Programme for Change

- Take forward various elements of JABS Programme for Change, including developing and implementing a research strategy to support continuous improvement.
- Consider new approaches to obtaining feedback from applicants at all stages of the recruitment process.
- Consider revisions to our operating model which will make best use of the new resources available to JABS - increased number of Board members, new legal appointment adviser and enhanced staff complement.

Governance and Assurance

- Continue the review of all JABS policies and augment where necessary.
- Discuss with SG appropriate revisions to the Framework Agreement and finalise by end 2024.
- Annual governance review to take place by end 2024.
- Publish the JABS 2023/4 Annual Report by September 2024.

Diversity

- Take forward the JABS Diversity Action Plan including the work of the Judicial Appointments Diversity Reference Group
- Publish JABS new diversity report in 2024 and thereafter annually.

Information Systems and Digital Resources

- Complete the ongoing review and implementation of JABS Records Management Plan.
- Prepare a design and delivery brief for procurement of JABS website, subject to approval of budget.

Board, Advisers and BMU

- Work with Scottish Government to recruit a new legal member
- Review staff requirements and recruit to agreed complement.
- Carry out a review of the induction programme and training regime, to include feedback from new Board members, BMU and advisers.

Engagement

- Undertake a review of existing engagement processes and produce a revised communication strategy to cover stakeholder engagement, outreach, website and social media presence.