

RE-SS 1.18a

**Candidate  
Information  
Booklet**

**IRC276496  
Head of Plant Health Division,  
Grade 6  
Department of Agriculture,  
Environment and Rural Affairs  
(DAERA)  
Northern Ireland Civil Service  
(NICS)**

**Completed Application Forms  
must be submitted to  
HRConnect no later than 12  
noon (UK time) on**

**Friday 9<sup>th</sup> December 2022**

**Please retain a copy of this  
booklet for your reference  
throughout the selection  
process.**

**Department of Agriculture,  
Environment and Rural Affairs  
(DAERA)**

**“Sustainability at the heart of a living,  
working, active landscape valued by  
everyone”.**

**Communication between HRConnect and you**

HRConnect will issue electronically as many competition communications as possible, you should therefore check your email account, including junk mail folder, to make sure that you don't miss any important communications in relation to this competition. There may, however, still be a necessity to issue some correspondence by hard copy mail.

**Contents**

	<b>Page</b>
<b>Foreword</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>Background</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>Key Responsibilities</b>	<b>8</b>
<b>Terms and Conditions</b>	<b>10</b>
<b>Eligibility Criteria</b>	<b>13</b>
<b>Assessment Process</b>	<b>16</b>
<b>Guidance for Applicants</b>	<b>19</b>

## FOREWORD

The Northern Ireland Civil Service (NICS) is seeking to fill a Grade 6 Head of Plant Health Division (HPHD) role that requires specific skills and experience. Applications are invited from candidates who meet the eligibility criteria, to apply for this opportunity and challenge.

This booklet provides further information on the key responsibilities of the Grade 6 HPHD role in the NICS and sets out the skills and competencies required. We have also included important information on the selection process.

There is currently 1 full time vacancy and the HPHD role falls within Forest Service which is in the Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs (DAERA). Forest Service Headquarters is in Enniskillen, County Fermanagh. This post is currently based at Dundonald House, Belfast, however this may be subject to location change.

It is envisaged that some element of home working and / or remote working may be possible in line with the NICS Hybrid Working policy and business need.

**Further information on the business area where the current vacancies are located is provided in the booklet.**

## **BACKGROUND**

**OUR VISION: “Sustainability at the heart of a living, working, active landscape valued by everyone.”**

DAERA employs some 3,000 people over 230 sites across NI, utilising some £579 million Resource and £95m Capital budget per annum. It owns almost 85,000 hectares of land and has operations right across all of our landscapes, including marine, watercourses, uplands and farming lands.

DAERA has responsibility for environment, food, farming, fisheries, forestry, rural development and sustainability policy. The Department supports: the development of thriving rural communities; the conservation and enhancement of the environment; the sustainable development of the agri-food industry, having regard for the needs of the consumers, the protection of human, animal and plant health and the welfare of animals; the development of the fisheries sector; and the development of our forested land.

Through the Northern Ireland Environment Agency (NIEA), the Department has responsibility for creating prosperity and wellbeing by environmental regulation. DAERA provides a Knowledge Advisory Service - a business development service for farmers and growers, and a veterinary service for administration of animal health and welfare. The Department’s College of Agriculture, Food and Rural Enterprise (CAFRE) delivers training and further and higher education courses in the agri-food sector.

### **DAERA Strategic Outcomes**

- Sustainable agri-food, fisheries, forestry and industrial sector;
- A clean, healthy environment, benefiting people, nature and the economy;
- A thriving rural economy, contributing to prosperity and wellbeing; and
- A well-led, high performing organisation focused on outcomes.

### **DAERA Top Management Group comprises:-**

- Corporate Services Group;
- Veterinary Service Animal Health Group;
- Environment Marine and Fisheries Group;
- Food and Farming Group; and
- Rural Affairs, Forest Service and Estates Transformation / Brexit Operational Readiness and Food Security Division.

### **DAERA has two Executive Agencies:**

- Northern Ireland Environment Agency (NIEA); and
- Forest Service.

The Department also sponsors six Arm's Length Bodies (ALBs) including:

**Advisory NDPB** - Council for Nature Conservation and the Countryside (CNCC).

**Executive NDPBs** - Agri-Food and Biosciences Institute (AFBI), Livestock and Meat Commission (LMC), Northern Ireland Fisheries Harbour Authority (NIFHA), and Agricultural Wages Board for Northern Ireland (AWB).

**North South Body** - The Loughs Agency of the Foyle, Carlingford and Irish Lights Commission.

The Permanent Secretary of DAERA is Katrina Godfrey.

## **FOREST SERVICE**

Forest Service delivers forestry and plant health functions on behalf of DAERA. Forest Service has operated as an Executive Agency under the leadership of the Chief Executive (CE) since 1 April 1998, and was further classified as a Non-Financial Public Corporation from 1 April 2020. The CE is subject to the overall direction of the DAERA Minister who determines the policy framework within which the Agency operates, the scope of its activities and the resources available for its work. The Minister approves the Forest Service Business Plan, sets the key performance targets and monitors the Agency's performance. Forest Service CE is also the Agency Accounting Officer.

### **Strategic Context**

The Agency's forestry and plant health activities are set in the context of the Department's vision for 'Green Growth' and strategic outcomes set out in the DAERA Strategic Plan. Increasingly, Forest Service is working with partners to deliver services from forests that also align with their strategic objectives. This allows Forest Service to focus on regulation of forestry and plant health, strategic planning and the technical aspects of developing and managing forests.

NI forests produce timber for industrial use and provide access for people to improve their health and wellbeing in a sustainable and attractive outdoor environment. Increasing forests and woodlands in NI, from the current 8.5% of land area to 12% by 2050, is a key element of the forestry strategy. This will increase the capacity of our forests to sequester carbon, contributing to the NI Executive's Green Growth strategy and commitments in the Climate Change Act (Northern Ireland) 2022, to meet the net-zero target by 2050.

Forest Service is responsible for protecting the plant health status of NI whilst facilitating trade in plants and plant products by applying Sanitary and Phytosanitary (SPS) controls. The application of these controls are critical to maintaining the plant health status of NI, protecting our natural environment, supporting NI's rural economy and contributing to the wellbeing of society. Forest

Service collaborates with the UK Plant Health Service in horizon scanning and managing risks from new and emerging pest threats moving in trade.

The key functions are to:

- Protect and promote forestry, to increase the natural capital of forests to deliver a sustainable programme of forest ecosystem services;
- Strengthen our approach to forest planning so that we are better able to identify the potential for forestry as a sustainable viable option for land-use change to help mitigate the effects of changing climate and other external impacts on forestry;
- Maintain independent certification of state forests;
- Safeguard the plant health status of our land-based industries through implementation of an effective plant health regulatory regime.

### **Forest Service Key Tasks**

Forest Service fulfils DAERA's legal obligations in the areas of forestry, plant and bee health, plant reproductive material certification and horticulture marketing standards.

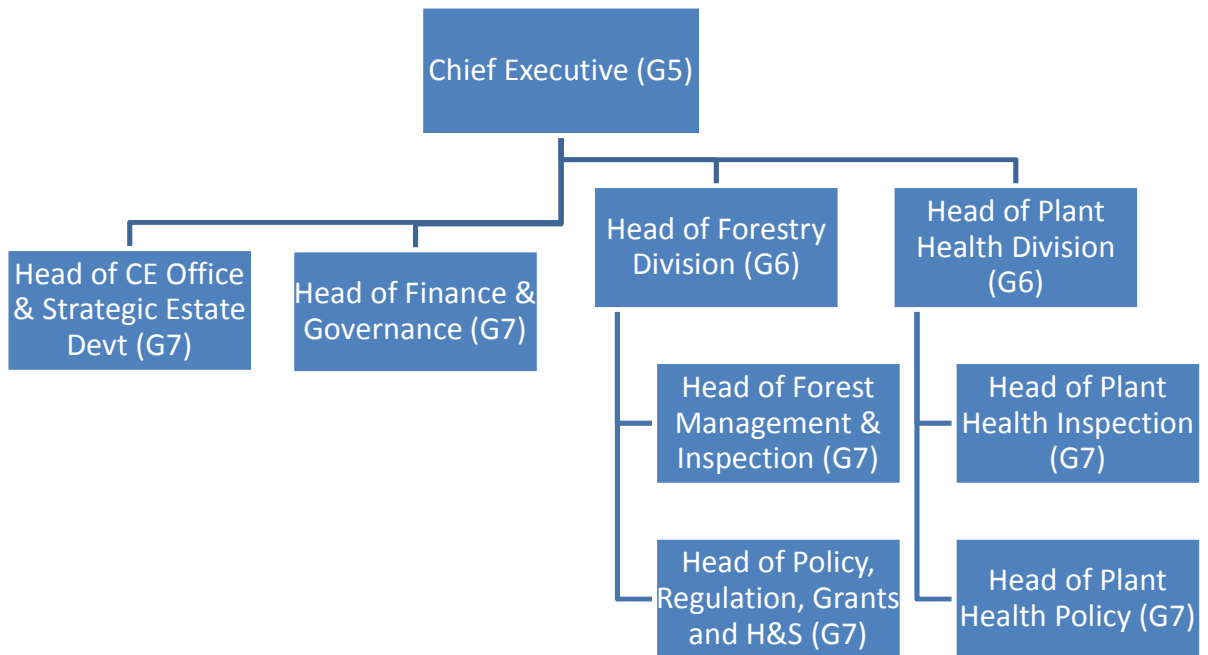
The key tasks required to deliver Ministerial policies are:

1. To expand forest cover in NI including taking forward the Forests for Our Future programme and the provision of grant aid;
2. To manage the Department's forests to:
  - Supply timber, regenerate and protect forests;
  - Ensure forests are managed taking account of carbon and climate implications and other ecosystem services they provide;
  - Promote public access by maintaining and improving facilities and visitor services through partnership working with local councils and others;
3. Verify sustainable management of DAERA forests through a process of independent audit against the UK Woodland Assurance Standard;
4. To provide a regulatory framework in line with the UK Plant Health Service and promote the protection of forests and plants from harmful pests and pathogens;
5. Operate an inspection and compliance programme and enforce legislative controls to protect the plant health status of the forestry, horticulture and agriculture sectors;

### **Plant Health Responsibilities are to:**

- 1) Promote a risk management approach to plant health regulation based on scientific evidence;
- 2) Provide a regulatory framework in line with the UK Plant Health Service, and promote the protection of forests and plants from harmful pests and pathogens;
- 3) Operate an inspection and compliance programme and enforce legislation to protect the plant health status of the agriculture and forestry sectors whilst facilitating trade and economic growth;
- 4) Maintain the legislative and knowledge base on plant health policies and legislation, to inform policy development and a common interest in plant health matters.

The Agency is a multidisciplinary organisation whose staff are employees of DAERA and are drawn mainly from forestry, agriculture, industrial and administrative disciplines. The diagram below sets out the HPHD's position as part of the Forest Service Senior Management team.



## KEY RESPONSIBILITIES

The purpose of the post is to operate a SPS regime to protect the plant health status of NI and to facilitate trade in plants and plant products. The HPHD will provide expert official assurance about disease, safeguarding our environment, agriculture and forests through official inspection of goods entering the territory, and by surveillance and management of disease outbreaks. The HPHD provides leadership and direction within the Plant Health Division in implementing all aspects of plant health work within the Agency.

The HPHD will lead and deliver fully integrated policy and operational functions to provide the CE and the Minister with assurance and advice which has the confidence of industry and other stakeholders, and deliver an effective regulatory service achieved with proportionate effort and cost. The HPHD will have a key role improving industry preparedness and resilience for disease management and changes to regulatory regimes, and a clear leadership role as a Senior UK Plant Health Professional<sup>1</sup>, gaining the confidence of key stakeholders in the professionalism and expertise of the service provided, securing compliance with regulatory controls, and achieving clear stakeholder support for effective enforcement action through authoritative communication and engagement.

The HPHD can expect to represent Forest Service on SPS technical matters; on global conventions, international and national regulatory requirements governing Phytosanitary and Plant Propagating material schemes; and have standing in discussing these matters with the Plant Health Authorities across the Devolved Administrations, the EU and third countries.

The HPHD will advise on appropriate governance of common resources including research and development to support plant health policy, ensuring that industry is prepared and the Division fully ready to support industry through legislation, inspection and official certification and contingency planning. The HPHD will understand, anticipate and communicate the essential trade pathways and risks to inform decision makers.

The main responsibilities of the HPHD are:

### **Advice**

To provide high quality strategic and professional advice to the CE, senior DAERA officials and the Minister;

- In developing policy on risk, preparedness and regulations; and
- In developing the annual business plan, setting the ambition for the scope of plant health activity consistent with the resources available.

### **Governance**

---

<sup>1</sup> <https://www.rsb.org.uk/careers-and-cpd/registers/plant-health-register>



- To provide Stewardship of the Agency's Plant Health Division, ensuring that regulation is appropriate and effective, and that there is a strategic match between the plant health programme, the DAERA vision and strategic aims of the Northern Ireland Executive;
- To ensure that expenditure represents value for money and meets the standards for regularity and propriety in the public service; and
- To contribute to the governance of the Agency as an Executive Director on the Forest Service Management Board.

### **Leadership/Management**

The HPHD commands the confidence of plant health professionals and the multi-disciplinary team to plan and deliver a comprehensive programme within the plant health responsibilities.

The HPHD:

- leads on setting the direction and development of a long term, strategic Plant Health policy, within the context of a changing global and dynamic environment, through engagement and collaboration within and with other Departments and key stakeholder representatives;
- contributes effectively as a Head of Division and member of Forest Service Management Board in the discharge of the Agency's corporate responsibilities and accountability;
- ensures that the Division is properly equipped with the staff, experience and skills needed to carry out the Agency's Plant Health specialist work;
- manages effectively the Plant Health Division to deliver the Agency's responsibilities for plant health;
- draws on the HPHD's knowledge and experience on plant health matters in providing advice to the CE, senior DAERA officials and the Minister.

Role within agency

### **Relationships**

The HPHD:

- represents and articulates the plant health policy position at regional and national events and inter-departmental and external working groups, particularly on future policy and trade, as required in support of the Minister and CE;
- builds and maintains effective working relationships with external stakeholders to inform the evidence-based development of plant health policy and effective controls; and
- leads on engaging and working in partnership with a wide range of stakeholders to achieve goals and outcomes relevant to the Agency's plant health responsibilities.

**The above list is not exhaustive but gives a good indication of the main duties of the posts. The emphasis on particular duties will vary over time according to business needs.**

## **TERMS AND CONDITIONS**

There is 1 permanent, full time vacancy.

Further appointments may be made from this competition should NICS positions become vacant which require the same eligibility criteria and have similar duties and responsibilities.

### **SECONDMENT**

This post may be filled by secondment of the successful candidate from his/her current employer. "Secondment" means a voluntary transfer from a permanent employer for a fixed period which does not sever the employment relationship of the person seconded with the permanent employer.

The duration will be agreed by all parties prior to the start of any secondment. A secondment would be on a candidate's current terms and conditions of service.

It is advisable that candidates interested in a secondment option make their employers aware that, under NICS secondment arrangements, the successful candidate will remain an employee of their current employer. The necessary administration arrangements will be agreed with the Department and the employer before a secondment arrangement commences.

### **Location**

Forest Service has its Headquarters in Enniskillen, County Fermanagh. This post is currently based at Dundonald House, Belfast, however may be subject to location change.

To build on our response to the Covid-19 pandemic and prepare for the future, a hybrid style of work which blends working at home (and remotely) with working in the office, will be operated by Forest Service in the context of the emerging NICS 'Hybrid Working' policy

### **Salary**

Salary will be within the range **£61,742 - £67,403** within which pay progression will be performance related.

Starting salary will be at the minimum of the scale. If the successful candidate is an existing civil servant, normal pay on promotion/re-grading arrangements will apply.

### **Pensions**

The NICS offers all employees an attractive pension package. Further details can be found on the Principal Civil Service Pensions Scheme (Northern Ireland) website at [www.finance-ni.gov.uk/civilservicepensions-ni](http://www.finance-ni.gov.uk/civilservicepensions-ni)

### **Holidays**

In addition to public and privilege holidays, currently 12 days, the annual leave allowance will be 25 days, rising to 30 days after 5 years' service.

## **Hours of Work**

The normal conditioned hours of work are full-time: 42 hours per week which includes a 1 hour meal break (37 hours net) Monday to Friday. On occasion, the postholder may be required to work outside these hours.

## **Travel**

The successful candidates will be required to travel on official duty frequently and regularly throughout Northern Ireland and travel nationally and internationally may also be required. It is therefore essential that applicants have access to a form of transport which will permit them to meet the requirements of the post in full, in line with the NICS HR Travel and Subsistence Policy.

## **Vetting**

An appointment will be dependent on the individual satisfying the vetting requirements for the post. The level of vetting required for this post is currently Basic.

## **Probation**

Confirmation of appointment will be dependent upon the satisfactory completion of a probationary period of 1 year. If performance, conduct or attendance during this period is not satisfactory the appointment may be terminated.

## **Career Development**

The NICS is committed to career development and offers attractive career prospects across a wide variety of roles and professions. Career development is an integral part of the performance management system. Personal Development Plans identify learning and development needs with a view to enhancing skills and capabilities. NI Civil Servants have access to a wide range of internal job opportunities, including secondments with external organisations and are encouraged and supported in proactively managing their career.

## **Conflict of Interest**

It is a basic requirement of all Civil Servants that their private activities should not bring them in to conflict with their official duties.

Conflict of Interest is not limited to the individual's own private, financial or other interests, as family, friends and associates may also have dealings which affect the Department's business directly or indirectly. Therefore to avoid any conflict or potential conflict and to demonstrate impartiality to the public at all times, an officer must not, without prior approval, engage in any activity which could be considered to be in conflict with official business.

As such, to protect employees and the Department from public criticism, it will be mandatory for the successful candidate to complete a Conflict of Interest declaration on appointment.

## **Professional Registration**

Applicants will be required to be registered as a Senior Plant Health Professional in the Register overseen by the Royal Society of Biology<sup>2</sup>, within a timescale deemed reasonable by the Department.

## **Further Information**

Applicants wishing to learn more about the post before deciding to apply may telephone Fiona Johnston on 028 6634 3007 or email [Fiona.Johnston@daera-ni.gov.uk](mailto:Fiona.Johnston@daera-ni.gov.uk)

If you have any questions about the competition process, or require any documentation in an alternative format, you should contact HRConnect on 0800 1 300 330 or email: [recruitment@hrconnect.nigov.net](mailto:recruitment@hrconnect.nigov.net)

---

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.rsb.org.uk/careers-and-cpd/registers/plant-health-register>  
Version 17

## ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA

Applicants must, by the closing date for applications:

1. Possess an honours degree in plant science or an applied plant science discipline such as agriculture, horticulture, forestry, or an equivalent qualification.

**AND**

2. Have at least 3 years' experience in the development and implementation of policy and effective controls for plant health protection within a medium sized complex organisation\*\*, managing staff and working relationships with a diverse range of internal and external stakeholders operating at senior management levels\*\*\* within their organisations.

**AND**

3. Have at least 3 years' experience, gained within the last 7 years, in providing advice, and influencing policy development and delivery at a senior management level\*\*\* in a regulatory environment.

The following additional clarification is provided:

\*\* "**Medium sized complex organisation**" is defined as having the following features:-

- A mix of professional and administrative staff (minimum 30 staff).
- A budget in excess of £1 million.
- Multiple stakeholders with competing interests.

\*\*\* **Senior management level** - for those working in the private sector or voluntary/community service, a senior manager is defined as a role which works just below Board level and with a Director as line manager. In the case of existing civil servants this would normally be at Grade 7 level or equivalent, or above.

Applications will also be considered from applicants with relevant formal qualifications considered by the selection panel to be of an equivalent or higher standard to those stated.

**Relevant or equivalent** qualifications: give the type of qualification and date awarded (the date awarded is the date on which you were notified of your result by the official awarding body). If you believe your qualification is equivalent to the one required, the onus is on you to provide the panel with details of modules studied so that a well-informed decision can be made.

Relevant professional membership: give details of the professional membership held and reasons why you consider it relevant to the membership required. The onus is on you to provide the panel with details of the professional membership so that a well-informed decision can be made.

You will be required to provide documentary evidence of your qualifications and/or professional membership at interview so please ensure you have these readily available.

Applications will also be considered from applicants with relevant formal qualifications considered by the selection panel to be of an equivalent or higher standard to those stated.

### **SHORTLISTING CRITERION**

Please note applicants should be aware that after an eligibility sift, should the Department decide to shortlist candidates to go forward to interview, the following shortlisting criterion will be used.

You should demonstrate:

Meeting the requirements of **eligibility criteria 3**, within a plant health regulatory environment.

#### **Guaranteed Interview Scheme**

As part of our commitment to the employment of disabled people, we operate a Guaranteed Interview Scheme (GIS). The GIS does not guarantee a job. However, its objective is to ensure disabled applicants, who meet the minimum essential eligibility criteria for the role they have applied for, are offered an interview. Further information on the GIS can be found at [Information for Disabled Applicants](#)

If you wish to apply under the GIS, you must declare this on your application form. Shortlisting criteria will not apply to GIS applicants.

If you do not wish to apply under the GIS, but do require us to make reasonable adjustments during the recruitment process, you should provide details on your application form. We will consider all requests for reasonable adjustments for any stage of this recruitment process. Details of any disability are only used for these purposes and do not form any part of the selection process.

If you have indicated on your application that you have a disability, are successful in the selection process and are being considered for appointment, you may be asked to outline any reasonable adjustments you consider necessary in order for you to take up an appointment. If you wish to discuss your disability requirements further, please contact HRConnect

**Please note:**

- You should ensure that you provide evidence of your experience in your application form, giving length of experience, examples and dates as required.
  - It is not sufficient to simply list your duties and responsibilities.
- The selection panel will not make assumptions from the title of the applicant's post or the nature of the organisation as to the skills and experience gained.
- If you do not provide sufficient detail, including the appropriate dates needed to meet the eligibility criteria, the selection panel will reject your application.
- The examples you provide should be concise and relevant to the criteria. This is very important as the examples which you provide may be explored at interview and you may need to be prepared to talk about these in detail if you are invited to interview. It is your unique role the panel are interested in, not that of your team or division.
- State clearly your personal involvement in any experience you quote. State "I" statements e.g. I planned meetings, I managed a budget, I prepared a presentation. It is how you actually carried out a piece of work that the panel will be interested in.
- ONLY the details provided by you in your application form (the employment history and eligibility criteria) will be provided to the selection panel for the purpose of determining your eligibility for the post. Please do not include your name in the employment history or eligibility criteria sections.
- The NICS Competency framework can be accessed via [www.nicsrecruitment.org.uk](http://www.nicsrecruitment.org.uk)

## ASSESSMENT PROCESS

The selection process will include a presentation and a competence based interview.

### PRESENTATION

As part of the interview candidates will be required to make a presentation relevant to the responsibilities of the post lasting no longer than 7 minutes. Candidates will be advised of presentation topic when they report for interview and will be given a maximum of 30 minutes to prepare for their presentation. Candidates should therefore report for interview at least 45 minutes earlier than their scheduled interview appointment to allow time to prepare their presentation.

A flipchart and writing materials will be provided for candidates' use. No personal documentation may be brought in to the pre-interview room. Candidates will be allowed to bring any flipchart sheets and some short speaking notes into the interview room for assistance during the presentation (but note that use of the flipchart is not mandatory). No other materials or visual aids will be permitted.

The presentation will be used to assess **Seeing the Big Picture** competence.

### Seeing the Big Picture

Seeing the big picture is about having an in-depth understanding and knowledge of how your role fits with, and supports, organisational objectives and the wider public needs. For all staff, it is about focusing your contribution on the activities which will meet Departmental and Programme for Government goals and deliver the greatest value. At senior levels, it is about understanding the political context and taking account of wider impacts, including the broader legislative agenda, to develop long term implementation strategies that maximise opportunities to add value to the citizen, support economic, sustainable growth and help to deliver the Northern Ireland Executive's priorities.

**Marks available: 20**

**Minimum Standard: 12**

#### 1. Leading and Communicating

At all levels, effectiveness in this area is about leading from the front and communicating with clarity, conviction and enthusiasm. It is about supporting principles of fairness of opportunity for all and a dedication to a diverse range of citizens. At senior levels, it is about establishing a strong direction and a persuasive future vision, managing and engaging with people with honesty and integrity, and upholding the reputation of the Department and the NICS.

**Marks available: 20**

#### 2. Collaborating and Partnering

People skilled in this area create and maintain positive, professional and trusting working relationships with a wide range of people within and outside the NICS, to help to achieve business objectives and goals. At all levels, it requires working



collaboratively, sharing information and building supportive, responsive relationships with colleagues and stakeholders, whilst having the confidence to challenge assumptions. At senior levels, it is about delivering business objectives through creating an inclusive environment, encouraging collaboration which may cut across departmental, organisational and wider boundaries. It requires the ability to build constructive partnerships and effective relationships with Ministers and their Special Advisers.

**Marks available: 20**

**Minimum Standard: 12**

### **3. Delivering Value for Money**

Delivering value for money involves the efficient, effective and economic use of taxpayers' money in the delivery of public services. For all staff, it means seeking out and implementing solutions which achieve a good mix of quality and effectiveness for the least outlay, thus reducing the risk of fraud and error. People who do this well base their decisions on evidenced information and follow agreed processes and policies, challenging these appropriately where they appear to prevent good value for money. At senior levels, effective people embed a culture of value for money within their area/function. They work collaboratively across boundaries to ensure that the NICS maximises its strategic outcomes within the resources available.

**Marks available: 20**

### **4. Making Effective Decisions**

Effectiveness in this area is about being objective, using sound judgement, evidence and knowledge to provide accurate, expert and professional advice. For all staff, it means showing clarity of thought, setting priorities, analysing and using evidence to evaluate options before arriving at well reasoned, justifiable decisions. At senior levels, leaders will be creating evidence based strategies, evaluating options, impacts, risks and solutions. They will aim to maximise return while minimising risk and to balance political, legislative, social, financial, economic and environmental considerations to provide sustainable outcomes.

**Marks available: 20**

**Minimum Standard: 12**

### **5. Achieving Outcomes through Delivery Partners**

Being effective in this area is about maintaining an economic, long-term focus in all activities. For all, it is about having a commercial, financial and sustainable mindset to ensure all activities and services are delivering added value and working to stimulate economic growth. At senior levels, it is about identifying economic, market and customer issues and using these to promote innovative business models, delivery partnerships and agreements to deliver greatest value; and ensuring tight controls of finances, resources and contracts to meet strategic priorities.

**Marks available: 20**

**Total Marks Available: 120**

**Overall Pass Mark: 72**

**Candidates must achieve the minimum standard where applicable and also achieve an overall pass mark of 72.**

## **COMPETENCE BASED INTERVIEWS**

Selection panels will design questions to test the applicant's knowledge and experience in each of the above areas and award marks accordingly.

No notes or personal documentation may be brought into the interview room.

## **INTERVIEWS**

It is intended that interviews for this post will take place at Greenmount, Antrim during week commencing **16<sup>th</sup> January 2023**.

## **NICS COMPETENCY FRAMEWORK**

The selection process will assess candidates against the NICS competency framework at level 4.

Competencies are the skills, knowledge and behaviours that lead to successful performance. The framework outlines ten competencies, which are grouped into three clusters. The competencies are intended to be discrete and cumulative, with each level building on the levels below i.e. a person demonstrating the competency at level 4 should be demonstrating levels 1, 2 and 3 as a matter of course.

The NICS competency framework sets out how all NICS employees should work. It puts the Civil Service values of integrity, honesty, objectivity and impartiality at the heart of everything they do, and it aligns to the three high-level leadership behaviours that every civil servant needs to model as appropriate to their role and level of responsibility: Set Direction; Engage People and Deliver Results.

The Northern Ireland Civil Service competency framework can be accessed via [www.nicsrecruitment.org.uk](http://www.nicsrecruitment.org.uk)

**It is important that all candidates familiarise themselves with the competency framework as this forms the basis of selection process. Should you require assistance in accessing the competency framework please contact HRConnect.**

## GUIDANCE FOR APPLICANTS

### APPLICATION FORM

You can apply online at [www.nicsrecruitment.org.uk](http://www.nicsrecruitment.org.uk).

Please refer to the Candidate Information Booklet before making your application and retain a copy for your reference. The application form is designed to ensure that applicants provide the necessary information to determine how they meet the competition requirements and the eligibility/shortlisting criteria. **All** parts of the application form **must** be completed by the applicant before this application can be considered. Failure to do so may result in disqualification.

#### Please note:

- We will not accept CVs, letters, additional pages or any other supplementary material in place of or in addition to completed application forms, unless it is specifically requested in the application form and candidate information booklet.
- All applications must be submitted by the advertised closing date and time.
- Information in support of your application will not be accepted after the closing date for receipt of applications.
- HRConnect will not examine applications until after the closing deadline.
- Do not use acronyms, complex technical detail etc. State for the reader who may not know your employer, your branch or your job.
- Only the employment history, eligibility and shortlisting sections will be made available to the panel.
- When completing the online application, your information is saved as you move through the pages. You may leave the application at any time, providing you have clicked on the 'Save & Continue' button. Once your application has been submitted the option to edit will no longer be available.
- The session timeout for the online application is 40 minutes, if you do not save or change page within this time you will automatically be logged out and any unsaved work will be lost.
- You must click SUBMIT once you have finished your online application. You will receive an acknowledgement email. Please contact HRConnect if you do not receive an acknowledgment email within 24 hrs.

#### Help with making your application

You can get advice or assistance with making an application from your local Jobs and Benefits Office - contact details are available on NIDirect: <https://www.nidirect.gov.uk/contacts/jobs-benefits-offices-jobcentres-and-social-security-offices>

You can also get advice or assistance from local disability employment organisations. To find out more about local disability employment organisations contact Northern Ireland Union of Supported Employment (NIUSE), an umbrella group for individuals and organisations promoting opportunities for people with disabilities to access and maintain employment, email [info@niuse.org.uk](mailto:info@niuse.org.uk), tel. 0044 (0)28 71 377709, text phone 0044 (0) 28 71 372077

## **INTERVIEW PREPARATION**

**If this is your first experience of a competence-based interview, bear in mind that it does not require you to:**

- Talk through previous jobs or appointments from start to finish;
- Provide generalised information as to your background and experience; or
- Provide information that is not specifically relevant to the competence the question is designed to test.

**A competence-based interview does however require you to:**

- Focus exclusively, in your responses, on your ability to fulfill the competences required for effective performance in the role; and
- Provide specific examples of your experience in relation to the required competence areas.

**In preparation for the interview you may wish to think about having a clear structure for each of your examples, such as:**

- Situation – briefly outline the situation;
- Task – what was your objective, what were you trying to achieve;
- Action – what did you actually do, what was your unique contribution;
- Result – what happened, what was the outcome, what did you learn.

The panel will ask you to provide specific examples from your past experience to demonstrate the range of behaviours associated with the competences being assessed. You should therefore come to the interview prepared to discuss in detail a range of examples which best illustrate your skills and abilities in each competence area.

You may draw examples from any area of your work / life experiences. For professional and technical posts, questions may be framed in the context of professional elements of the post.

## GENERAL INFORMATION

### **The Merit Principle**

In accordance with the Office of the Civil Service Commissioners' Recruitment Code, appointments to the NICS are made under the 'merit principle', where the best person for any given post is selected in fair and open competition.

Further information on the Civil Service Commissioners can be found at [www.nicscommissioners.org](http://www.nicscommissioners.org).

### **NICSHR Privacy Notice**

NICSHR are committed to protecting your privacy. HRConnect manage job applications on behalf of NICSHR, in line with the NICSHR privacy notice available via [www.nicsrecruitment.org.uk](http://www.nicsrecruitment.org.uk)

### **Offers of Employment**

Candidates will only receive one offer of appointment which, if not accepted, will generally result in withdrawal from the competition.

### **Changes in personal circumstances and contact details**

Please ensure HRConnect are informed immediately of any changes in personal circumstances. It is important that HRConnect have up to date contact details.

### **Transgender Requirements**

Should you currently be going through a phase of transition in respect of gender and wish this to be taken into consideration, in confidence, to enable you to attend any part of the assessment process please contact HRConnect. Details of this will only be used for this purpose and do not form any part of the selection process.

### **Merit List**

**HRConnect will allocate a candidate (or candidates) to a vacancy (or vacancies) in the order listed.** It is presently intended that the merit list for this competition should remain extant for a period of one year. However you should be aware that circumstances may arise in the future where it will be necessary to extend the currency of the merit list for a further period. The merit list will only be extended where cogent practical reasons for doing so arise.

### **Disability Requirements**

We will ask on the application form if you require any reasonable adjustments, due to disability, to enable you to attend any part of the assessment process. Details of any disability are only used for this purpose and do not form any part of the selection process. If you have indicated on your application that you have a disability and are successful in the selection process and are being considered for appointment, you may be required to outline any adjustments you consider necessary in order for you to take up an appointment. If you wish to discuss your disability requirements further, please contact HRConnect.

## **Documentation**

Identification documents to satisfy the Nationality and Security requirements of the post will be required. Further details regarding acceptable documentation will be issued with an invitation to attend for assessment.

You will be required to bring documentary evidence of your qualifications / professional membership to assessment.

You should ensure that the required documents are readily available.

## **Right to Work and Nationality Requirements**

HRConnect must ensure that you are legally entitled to work in the United Kingdom and satisfy the Nationality requirements for appointment to the NICS. Please note **ALL** applicants for external recruitment will be subject to a Nationality validation check.

Applicants must be either:

- (i) UK national; or
- (ii) National of a Commonwealth country; or
- (iii) National of the Republic of Ireland; or
- (iv) EEA nationals with settled status under the EU Settlement Scheme; or
- (v) Relevant EEA or Turkish nationals working in the Civil Service; or
- (vi) Relevant EEA or Turkish nationals who have built up the right to work in the Civil Service; or
- (vii) Certain family members of the relevant EEA & Turkish nationals

**ALL** candidates are required to state their nationality in the Right to Work and Nationality Requirements response box in Part 1 of your application form.

For candidates applying under categories iv – vii you are required to provide the following information in the Right to Work and Nationality Requirements response box in Part 1 of your application form. Failure to provide the requested information **WILL** result in your application being rejected.

Category iv – Please provide your ‘Share code’ in the ‘Share code’ field which will be used to validate your right to work in the UK. You can find further detail on obtaining your [‘share code’](#) here

Category v - Please provide your ‘Share code’ in the ‘Share code’ field which will be used to validate your right to work in the UK. You can find further detail on obtaining your [‘share code’](#) here. You are also required to provide your payroll

number in the nationality response box to demonstrate that you are working in the Northern Ireland Civil Service;

Category vi - Please provide your 'Share code' in the 'Share code' field which will be used to validate your right to work in the UK. You can find further detail on obtaining your '[share code](#)' here. Please provide confirmation in the nationality response box that you hold indefinite or limited leave to remain in the UK and that this was granted prior to 31st December 2020.

Category vii - Please provide your 'Share code' in the 'Share code' field which will be used to validate your right to work in the UK. You can find further detail on obtaining your '[share code](#)' here. In addition, please provide evidence in the nationality response box to support your application for applying as a family member of a relevant EEA and Turkish national. Further documentary evidence may be request from HRConnect to support this;

'Family member of the relevant EEA or Turkish nationals' means:

- (i) That national's spouse\*; or
- (ii) A direct descendant (child, grandchild etc.) of that national or his/her spouse who is under 21 years of age or is their dependent; or
- (iii) A dependent relative in the ascending line (parent, grandparent etc.) of the EEA national or his/her spouse.

\*Note: 'Spouse' does not include a party to a marriage of convenience and in the case of EEA national vocational students family members are restricted to spouses and dependent children only

(Public Service/reserved posts insert)

- (i) A UK national; or
- (ii) an Irish or non-UK Commonwealth citizen who was in post in the NICS on 31 May 1996, or was appointed from a competition with a closing date on or before 31 May 1996, and who has remained in the NICS since that time.

Where a candidate has a right to work status which has a time limitation, ongoing checks will be in place to ensure the right to work is maintained.

Further guidance on Nationality requirements is available via [www.nicsrecruitment.org.uk](http://www.nicsrecruitment.org.uk).

## **Security**

### 1. Baseline Personnel Security Standard

For this post in the NICS the level of vetting is a Baseline Standard. For this check you will be required to provide the following:

- a) Your passport OR

- b) A document verifying your permanent National Insurance number (e.g. P45, P60 or National Insurance card) **AND** your birth certificate which includes the names of your parents (long version).
- c) A specimen signature at any assessment event and have this validated against passport, driving licence, application form etc.

Further information regarding the Baseline Personnel Security Standard, including other acceptable documents is available via [www.gov.uk](http://www.gov.uk).

We will organise a Criminal Record Check on all applicants to be carried out by AccessNI. The category of AccessNI check required for this post is;

### **Basic Disclosure Certificate**

You should not put off applying for a post because you have a conviction. We deal with all criminal record information in a confidential manner, and information relating to convictions is destroyed after a decision is made. Further information regarding policy on the recruitment of ex-offenders and the vetting process is available at [www.nicsrecruitment.org.uk](http://www.nicsrecruitment.org.uk) in Recruitment Policy and Procedures manual.

Security Policy for AccessNI Disclosure Information is available at [www.nicsrecruitment.org.uk](http://www.nicsrecruitment.org.uk) under Useful Information.

The AccessNI code of practice can be accessed via [www.nidirect.gov.uk/accessni](http://www.nidirect.gov.uk/accessni)

Those applicants who are being considered for appointment will be contacted by HRConnect, normally after interview/test, and will be asked to complete the AccessNI application form. Please note that a request to complete this form should not be seen as a guarantee of an offer of appointment.

Failure to complete the application form and return it within the specified time will be regarded as 'no longer interested in the position' and your application will be withdrawn.

Criminal Record information is subject to the provisions of the Rehabilitation of Offenders (NI) Order 1978.

### **Equal Opportunity Monitoring Form**

**Please note the Equal Opportunities monitoring section of the application form is mandatory in order to submit an application.**

For guidance on completing the Monitoring Form and to read the NICS Equal Opportunities Policy Statement please refer to the DoF website [www.finance-ni.gov.uk](http://www.finance-ni.gov.uk).

**Applications from Protestants, females, young people (people under the age of 35), people with a disability and people from minority ethnic communities are particularly welcomed for this post**

**The Northern Ireland Civil Service is an Equal Opportunities Employer.**  
All applications for employment are considered strictly on the basis of merit.



## **Feedback**

The Northern Ireland Civil Service is committed to ensuring that the processes used to recruit and select staff are fair and in accordance with the principles of the Civil Service Commissioners Code. We are consequently committed to providing feedback in respect of decisions taken in determining eligibility/shortlisting as well as at interview. Feedback in respect of eligibility/shortlisting will be communicated automatically to those candidates who fail to satisfy any criteria. All requests for feedback are welcome.

**THIS INFORMATION PACK DOES NOT FORM PART OF  
CONDITIONS OF EMPLOYMENT**