

# Research Development Manager - Grade 7

Completed Application Forms must be returned  
to HRConnect no later than 12 noon (UK time)  
on 13th November 2026.

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### Communication between HRConnect and you

HRConnect will issue competition communications electronically. Please ensure you check your email account regularly, to make sure that you don't miss any important communications. There may be a requirement to issue competition communications by post.

Please update us with any changes to your email address and home address to ensure you are fully informed at all times.

### Equal Opportunities

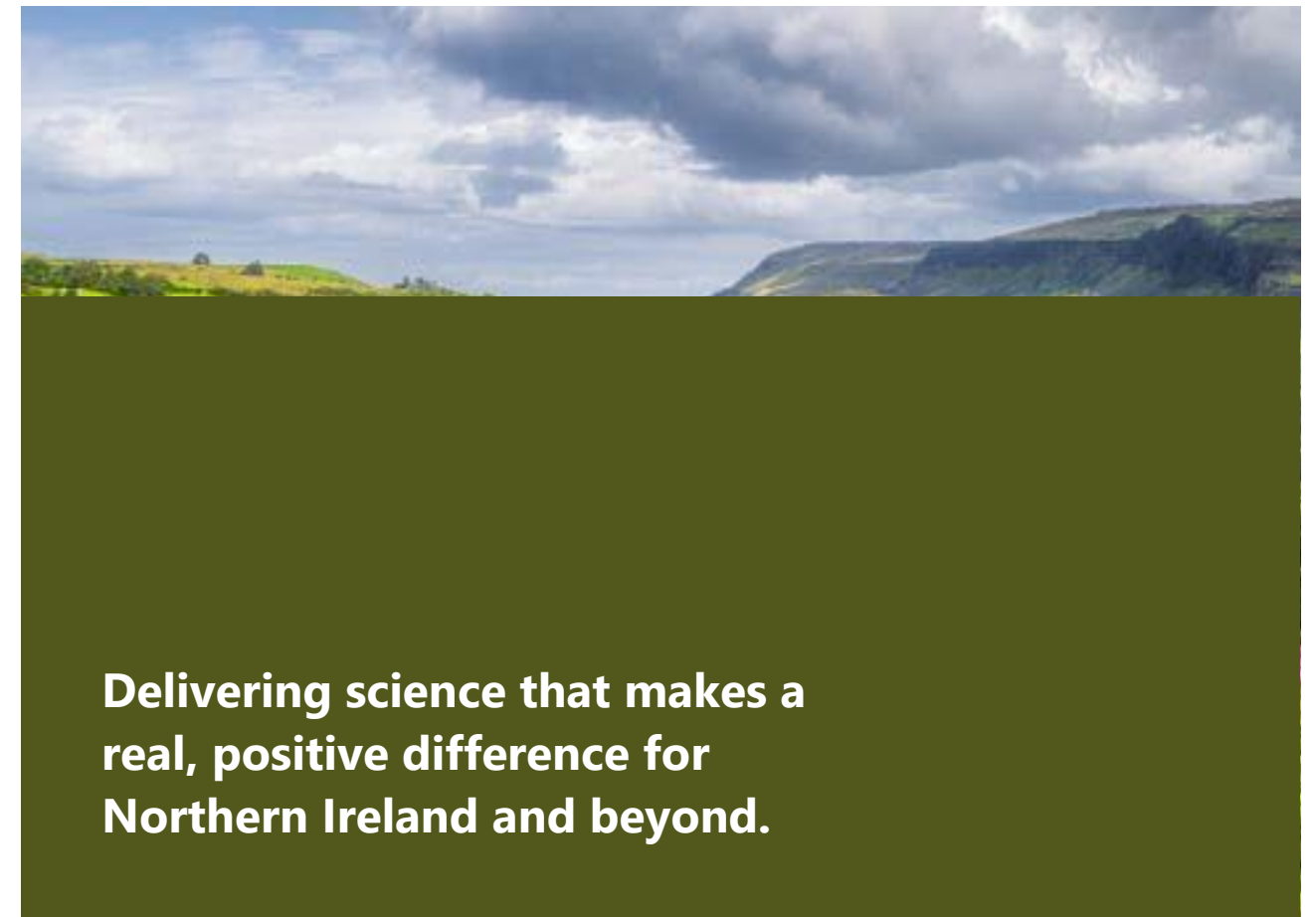
Agri-Food and BioSciences Institute (AFBI) is an equal opportunities employer and has been awarded the Charter Mark Accreditation in recognition for our commitment towards Gender Diversity and Inclusion in the workplace. All appointments will be made strictly on the basis of merit.

If you have any queries with regard to this recruitment process or require any documentation in an alternative format, please contact HRConnect via email

**Recruitment@HRConnect.nigov.net** or call **0800 1 300 330**.

Feedback - AFBI is committed to providing feedback to assist the development of current and future applications.

# Recruitment Overview



**Delivering science that makes a real, positive difference for Northern Ireland and beyond.**

Thank you for your interest in our organisation. At AFBI you will find a fantastic team spirit and a commitment to the development of both you and your skills so that you can choose to have a long-term career with us.

This Candidate Information Booklet offers specific information to applicants. **Please note read across will not be undertaken by the panel.** The candidate must demonstrate how they meet each criterion in the relevant response to each criterion.

Please read this document carefully in advance of submitting your application and retain it for reference throughout the recruitment process.

At AFBI, we take great pride in the work we undertake. All AFBI employees are appointed on merit on the basis of fair and open competition.

**We wish you every success in your application!**

**Important dates:** It is intended that interviews for this post will take place in AFBI HQ, Newforge Lane, Belfast on week commencing 14th December 2026.

**Compulsory documentation:** It is compulsory that all candidates invited to attend an assessment and/or interview, bring sufficient identification. Your attendance may not be permitted in instances where identification cannot be shown.

# You want to change the world. So do we.

Agri-Food and BioSciences Institute (AFBI) is a leading provider of scientific research and services to government, non-governmental organisations and commercial organisations.

We are sponsored by our key stakeholder, the Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs (DAERA).

Our customers include a range of local, national and international commercial companies, Northern Ireland and UK Departments, Agencies and associated bodies in the European Union.

As a leading institute of research, we tackle the complex challenges of our industry through purpose-driven science. We are a community with a common goal: to leave the world better than we found it.



Are we ambitious? Definitely. Are our ambitions achievable? Absolutely. AFBI has been defying scientific boundaries to create measurable, scalable and enduring solutions to agri-food and marine science complexities in Northern Ireland, and beyond - since 2006.

We are delighted that you are considering joining us.

Of all the many factors that come together to make AFBI what it is, nothing is more important than our employees. Every area of our service delivery is underpinned by a number of dedicated teams working in synchrony to ensure the provision of scientific excellence. Across our four divisions, every team member, from those on the scientific front to those working behind the scenes in one of our offices, plays an essential role in delivering our long tradition of excellence, whilst helping to propel future discoveries.

Together we are better.

#### **Our People Vision is to:**

Attract, empower and grow purpose-driven staff with the passion and capability to pursue excellence, embrace technology and cultivate innovation and change.

**This is how we do great science.  
Great people. Great science.**

# About Finance and Corporate Affairs Division



Finance and Corporate Affairs Division (FCAD) is based primarily at AFBI headquarters, Newforge Lane, Belfast but with staff deployed at some of the larger sites.

It supports the AFBI Chief Executive and the Executive Management Team (EMT) in securing and deploying the financial, people and infrastructure resources of AFBI. The division has a key role in ensuring that AFBI is an efficient, effective, sustainable and accountable organisation with high standards of governance.

FCAD also includes the Research Support Office which identifies research, funding and commercial opportunities.

## FCAD Branches

- Corporate Projects
- Estate Management and Development
- Finance
- Governance and Performance
- Health, Safety and Compliance
- People & Culture
- Research Support and Corporate Communications

## About the Research Office

Established in 2020, the AFBI Research Office was developed to enhance AFBI's success in maximising the benefit from relevant external funding and commercialisation opportunities, including the provision of support and guidance to AFBI staff during the development stage of funding applications. The unit facilitates horizon scanning, seeking to ensure that management and scientific colleagues are kept informed of emerging opportunities. In addition, it supports colleagues through the administrative process involved in winning and then managing grant funded projects.

The AFBI Research Office drives engagement with a broad range of partners from Government to industrial and commercial clients, resulting in increased external income generation. The Research Office is responsible for: identifying and developing potential research and enterprise incomes sources, promoting these opportunities to relevant colleagues, supporting staff in preparing grant and commercial applications, managing the application/tendering/contracting process and providing post-award support (including on such issues as reporting and auditing). The team will also provide a critical role in support of the Institute's approach to the realisation and assessment of impact arising from its research and innovation activities.

# Job Background

AFBI wishes to appoint an outstanding individual to the position of Research Development Manager within the Research Office (RO). Reporting directly to the Head of the AFBI Research Office within the Finance & Corporate Affairs Division (FCAD), the postholder will play a key role in the development and delivery of AFBI's research strategy.

The postholder will lead and provide a proactive proposal development service, including coordinating the contribution from scientific colleagues and external collaborators to ensure the submission of high quality, suitably costed, robust, competitive and fundable applications.

While the precise duties and responsibilities can vary, key responsibilities include:

## Development and Implementation

The role holder will work with colleagues in the AFBI Research Office and across the Science Divisions to develop and implement an AFBI External Funding Plan in support AFBI's research priorities.

- Proactively horizon-scan and identify strategic research funding opportunities, national and international, for the institution.
- Promote participation in key funding calls including briefing senior staff regarding strategically significant funding opportunities and recommending appropriate actions to support the bid process
- Identify best practices and new approaches to improving the capabilities of the scientific and research staff and work to enhance their effectiveness in securing external funding and developing external relationships.

## Development and Implementation of a Postgraduate Research Strategy

The role holder will work with colleagues in the AFBI Research Office and across the Science Divisions to develop and implement an AFBI Postgraduate Strategy in support AFBI's research priorities.

- Provide leadership and oversight for all matters relating to PhD research including strategy development, management of student support functions and governance arrangements.

## Establish and Maintain Key Relationships

- Develop/maintain AFBI's relationships with key contacts, including research funding organisations, charities and foundations, industry bodies as well as Research Offices in other institutions, taking the lead with stakeholders most pertinent to this portfolio.
- Lead in the development of strategic partnerships and effective administration with PhD awarding universities.



## Operation of a Support Service

- Work closely with the Head of the RO to help and advise Principal Investigators on relevant aspects of external grant submission, from alerting researchers of funding opportunities to timely submission of grant, ensuring quality of the submission, adherence to internal and external guidelines and deadlines and finally advising senior management on approval of the proposal.
- Work with colleagues to maximise international research grant opportunity capture and project manage to deliver high quality submissions.
- Work with colleagues in Finance and Science Divisions to shape competitive and robustly costed applications to maximise the value to AFBI.
- Manage application and award funding processes and a portfolio of funded awards to agreed governance, policies and timeframes.
- Identify best practices and new approaches both internally and externally to AFBI to improving the capabilities of the scientific and research staff and work to enhance their effectiveness in securing

external funding and developing external relationships.

- Develop and maintain a deep understanding of the specific scientific knowledge coupled with the research expertise of the AFBI scientific community.
- Ensure that key individuals are given every opportunity to develop and promote their scientific credibility and personal scientific reputation and thus lead to value and impact for AFBI.

## Research Support Development

- Provide leadership and engender a supportive and motivating environment for colleagues in the scientific divisions to actively seek opportunities to develop the quality and value of AFBI's research portfolio.
- Keep up to date with current and future policy developments to inform the development of new or revised AFBI policies and procedures relating to research. Design and implement such policies and processes in consultation with the relevant users.



- Work with colleagues within the Research Office and across the Finance and Corporate Affairs Division to contribute to the provision of a proactive, integrated, and strategically focused professional services support function.
- Lead on the development and implementation of an institutional research training programme for colleagues at all stages of their research careers.

## Reporting and Communicating

- Work with the Head of the Research Office to analyse the research performance at AFBI, reporting to AFBI Senior Leadership and Board on activities, trends and results, with information on the implications of funding decisions.

**This list is not exclusive and the successful candidate may be required to carry out other duties commensurate with the grade.**

# Job Information and Employee Benefits

A reserve list will exist and will be held for a period of 12 months from the date of interview, to cover any similar vacancies which may arise.

## Salary

The salary for the post starts at **£61,673 to £64,469** (under review). Pay increases will be on an incremental basis provided staff performance reports are satisfactory.

Starting salary will normally be at the minimum of the scale.

## Working Hours

The full-time working week is **37 hours** excluding meal breaks, Monday to Friday. You may be required on occasion to work outside normal office hours. AFBI operates a flexi working system.

## Location

The successful candidate will be based at AFBI **Newforge, 18a Newforge Lane, Belfast, BT9 5PX**, however, they may on occasion, also be expected to work at other sites in Northern Ireland as required.

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

## Travel

The post will require access to a form of transport which will permit the successful candidate to meet the requirements of the post in full.

## Pre-employment Checks

Pre-employment checks consist of a qualification check and an AccessNI check. The security check required for this post is Standard Disclosure Certificate. HRConnect will provide your details to Experian who will undertake this check. This is a two-part process during which all communications will be issued to you electronically.

## VISAs (if applicable)

If there is a requirement for a VISA/VISA renewal, AFBI would not be responsible for the financial costs, this would be the onus of the candidate. AFBI will however support the Certificate of Sponsorship.

## Annual Leave & Public Holidays

We provide a generous annual leave allowance of **25 days increasing to 30 after five years'** satisfactory service. In addition, all employees are entitled to 12 days public/ privilege holidays each year.

## Probationary Periods

Appointment is subject to the satisfactory completion of a **12-month probationary period**. At the end of the probation period, a formal review will be conducted.



## Pension

We offer an unrivalled pension scheme that will help you beyond your employment with us. All permanent AFBI staff are enrolled into the Northern Ireland Civil Service Scheme from their first day of employment.

There is no qualifying or waiting period. Staff contribute between **4.65 and 8.25%** of salary and AFBI contribute up to a further **34.25% of salary**, depending on your rate of pay. Pension contributions are collected before tax, so you also get tax relief at your marginal tax rate on the contributions you pay.

## Professional Development

We believe in our employees and understand the importance of investing in ongoing development. Support for professional development will always be considered.

## Employee Benefits

AFBI offers employees an unrivalled benefits package. For further information [please click here](#)

## Further Information

Further Information about the post may be obtained from:

[fcadpeopleandculture@afbini.gov.uk](mailto:fcadpeopleandculture@afbini.gov.uk)

For information on how the recruitment process will be managed and for further recruitment and selection resources, [please click here](#)

For information on our equal opportunities, [please click here](#)

# Eligibility Criteria

**Applicants must, by the closing date for applications, provide evidence in their application form which demonstrates that they satisfy the following essential criteria.**

- 1) Hold a degree-level qualification (or equivalent)  
**AND**  
at least 3 years' experience of providing expert advice and leading the development of competitive research funding applications  
**AND**  
a proven track record of securing or substantially contributing to the development of successful large-scale collaborative research funding applications.
- 2) Demonstrable experience of working with research funding bodies and coordinating successful high-value\* research grant applications, with a proven track record of securing funding aligned to funder priorities.
- 3) Demonstrable experience of analysing and interpreting information to inform decision-making, preparing reports and policy papers, and presenting findings to senior management\*\* committees or boards.
- 4) Demonstrable ability to influence and work collaboratively with internal and external stakeholders to identify research application needs, develop appropriate solutions, and ensure delivery within agreed timescales and budgets.

\*High-value is defined as a project valued at £1 million or more.

\*\* Senior management is defined as experience gained in reporting to a Director or Chief Executive or holding a post equivalent to that of a Grade 7 within the Northern Ireland Civil Service.

**Please note:** 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. 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, information proving equivalency, etc. so that a well-informed decision can be made.

Further information on determining the equivalence of relevant formal qualifications can be found at [www.gov.uk/what-different-qualification-levels-mean/compare-different-qualification-levels](http://www.gov.uk/what-different-qualification-levels-mean/compare-different-qualification-levels)



## Person Specification

This position is analogous to **Grade 7 Level** in the NICS.

Candidates will be expected to demonstrate the skills and competencies set out in the Eligibility Criteria.

In addition, they will also be required to demonstrate competency in Professional Knowledge & Skills pertaining to this post together with the skills and competencies set out in the Northern Ireland Civil Service (NICS) competency framework at Level 4 for the purpose of personal and professional development.

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

**You should refer to the behaviours listed under level 4 of the relevant competence areas.**

To view the NICS Competency Framework, [please click here](#)

## Assessment Process

In addition to satisfying the eligibility criteria and shortlisting (if applicable) applicants will also be expected to display the following qualities and skills and interview. This will be competence-based interview. Please note that the interview will last approximately **60 minutes**.

### Competency Based Interview

The selection panel will design questions to test the applicants' knowledge and experience in each of the following areas below and award marks accordingly.

Notes and/or personal documentation is not permitted during this section of the process. Please note that reasonable adjustments will be considered.

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**

### 1. Professional Knowledge and Skills

Professional Knowledge and Skills is about demonstrating the specialist knowledge, technical expertise and practical skills required to perform effectively in a role.

**Marks Available: 20**  
**Minimum Standard: 12**

### 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 organisation, to help to achieve business objectives and goals. At all levels, it requires working collaboratively, sharing information and building supportive,

### 3. Managing a Quality Service

Effectiveness in this area is about being organised to deliver service objectives and striving to improve the quality of service, taking account of diverse customer needs and requirements. People who are effective plan, organise and manage their time and activities to deliver a high quality and efficient service, applying programme and project management approaches appropriately and effectively to support service delivery. At senior levels, it is about creating an environment to deliver operational excellence and creating the most appropriate and cost effective delivery models for public services.

**Marks Available: 20**

#### 4. 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**

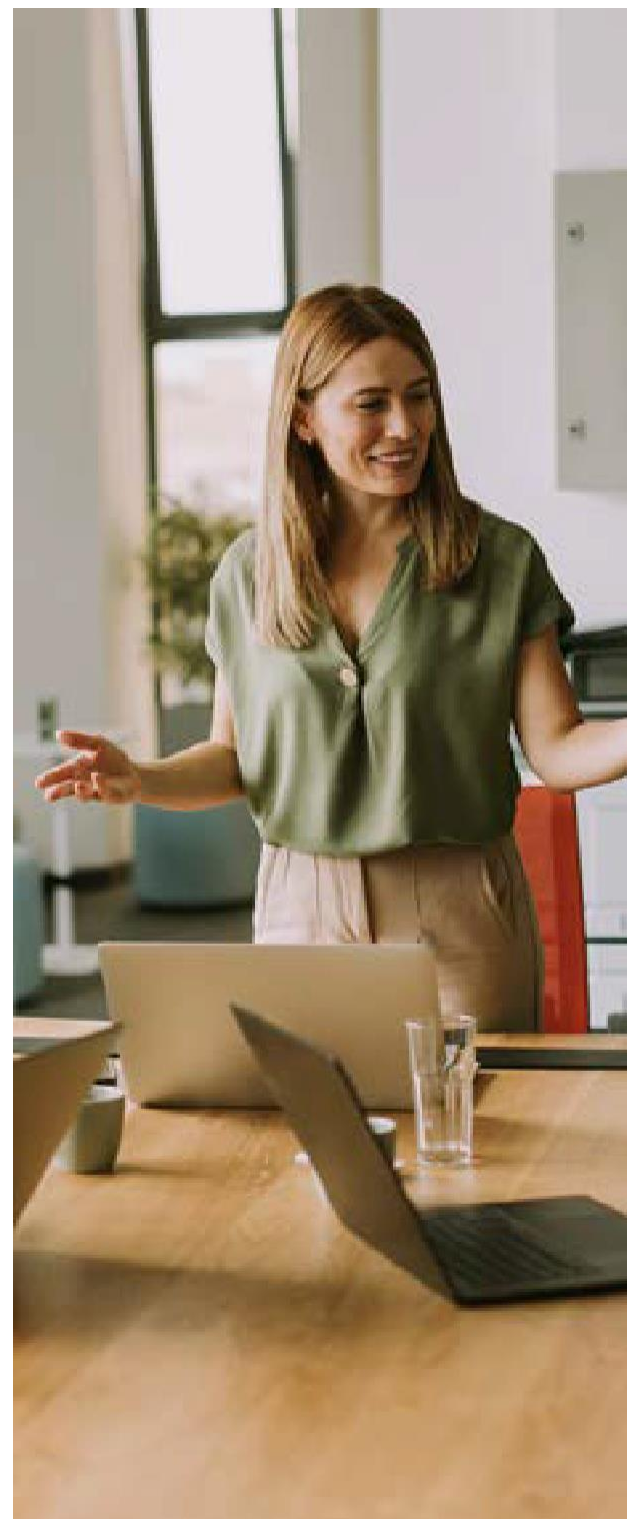
#### 5. Changing and Improving

People who are effective in this area are responsive, innovative and seek out opportunities to create effective change. For all staff, it is about being open to change, suggesting ideas for improvements to the way things are done, and working in 'smarter', more focused ways.

At senior levels, this is about creating and contributing to a culture of innovation and allowing people to consider and take managed risks. Doing this well means continuously seeking out ways to improve policy development and implementation and building a more flexible and responsive NICS. It also means making use of alternative delivery models including digital and shared service approaches where possible.

**Marks Available: 20**

**Total marks available: 100 Overall  
pass mark: 60 (60%)**



## Contact

For more information contact  
HRConnect on:

**T: 0800 1300 400**

**E: [nics@hrconnect.nigov.net](mailto:nics@hrconnect.nigov.net) W:**

**[www.afbini.gov.uk](http://www.afbini.gov.uk)**

Thank you for your  
interest in this role.