

Head of the Northern Ireland Civil Service

IRC254532

Completed application forms must be returned to HRConnect no later than **12 noon (UK time) on Wednesday 29 July 2020.**

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

Candidate Information Booklet



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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.

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FOREWORD

The position of Head of the NI Civil Service (NICS) is a critical role and one of significant responsibility. The post holder will work at the heart of government, responsible for leading almost 23,000 civil servants to serve the institutions of government and all our citizens through the provision of excellent public services.

The post holder will require a full range of high level skills and relevant experience to enable them to function effectively across an extensive portfolio within the context of a unique political environment.

In particular, they must demonstrate real leadership capabilities and will be responsible for spearheading a programme of ongoing reform across the NICS.

This will include a focus on ensuring the NICS is high-performing, outcomes-focused and well placed to deliver on the Executive's Programme for Government commitments; continuously developing a dynamic and innovative workforce; ensuring the organisation can attract and retain new talent; and creating a fully inclusive workplace in which diversity is truly valued.

As the most senior official in the organisation, you will be the principal policy adviser to the First Minister and deputy First Minister across all the issues of government and will act as Secretary to the Executive. You will also head up The Executive Office.

This is undoubtedly an enormously challenging but hugely rewarding role. If you feel you have the necessary skills and experience; embody the core civil service values of integrity, honesty, objectivity and impartiality; and believe you can lead the NICS to support the institutions of government to make a real and lasting difference in people's lives, then we would strongly encourage you to apply.



Arlene Foster
First Minister

Michelle O'Neill
deputy First Minister

BACKGROUND

The NICS is a major employer with some 22,845 staff across NI managing a total annual budget in excess of £20 billion. It is currently structured on the basis of 9 Government Departments which together are responsible for a very wide range of policies and services that affect the lives of everyone in NI. More information can be found on the website www.nidirect.gov.uk

The key role of the Head of the Civil Service (HOCS) is to support the NI administration in the achievement of its Programme for Government by providing clear policy advice to Ministers and delivering a wide range of public services.

The HOCS is also the Head of The Executive Office and Secretary to the NI Executive comprising Ministers with Executive responsibility.

The Executive Office (TEO) is responsible for:

- supporting the First and deputy First Minister (FM and dFM), and Junior Ministers;
- serving the needs of the NI Executive;
- supporting the bodies established under the Belfast Good Friday Agreement, including the North/South Ministerial Council, British Irish Council (BIC) and the commitments set out in the New Decade, New Approach agreement;
- delivering the functions of the Office on behalf of the FM and the dFM;
- discharging the duties arising from the external relations of the Executive; and
- providing a range of services to other NI Departments.

There are approximately 313 staff in TEO which has an annual budget of around £100 million.

At present TEO comprises the following business areas:

- HOCS Office;
- Programme for Government and NICS of the Future;
- Finance and Corporate Services;
- Infrastructure;
- Good Relations/Together Building a United Community;
- Urban Villages, Racial Equality and Communities in Transition;
- Equality, Victims and Human Rights;
- International Relations including EU Future Relations;
- FM and dFM Private Offices;
- North South Ministerial Council Secretariat;
- Executive Information Services;
- Executive and Central Advisory Division; and
- Office of the Legislative Counsel.

TEO also has a sponsoring role for a number of Arm's Length Bodies including:

- Equality Commission for NI;
- Community Relations Council;
- Commission for Victims and Survivors;
- Victims and Survivors Service;
- Strategic Investment Board Ltd;
- Maze Long Kesh Development Corporation;
- Commissioner for Public Appointments;
- NI Judicial Appointments Commission;
- Attorney General's Office; and
- Contingency planning.

KEY RESPONSIBILITIES

This is a highly visible leadership role in a diverse organisation which operates in a constantly changing, complex, resource constrained and highly political environment.

The successful candidate must:

- earn and retain the confidence of the FM and dFM and other Ministers in the NI Executive through the provision of sound, clear and impartial advice that demonstrates sensitivity to a range of interlinked issues relevant to the delivery of the vision and ambition the Executive has for all in our society;
- ensure that the NICS provides effective, efficient and responsive support to the administration meeting the needs of the Executive delivering on the issues facing our diverse society, economy and environment to deliver real and positive change in people's lives;
- develop and maintain relationships and work across boundaries, organisations, sectors, groups and communities to maximise the outcomes of all NICS activities in NI and wider afield;

- effectively deal with difficult and sensitive situations where conflicting views may need to be reconciled;
- work impartially and objectively in a complex political environment ensuring that the NICS provides effective, efficient and responsive support to the administration, meeting the needs of the Executive and all citizens;
- provide a clear strategic lead to the NICS, including the group of Permanent Secretaries who play a critical role in the management and performance of the NICS, engendering effective, collective and inclusive leadership across the NI Departments;
- promote and behave in accordance with the NICS Code of Ethics.

The postholder will be expected to operate effectively in a sensitive and complex political environment which is unique to NI.

Like many major organisations, the NICS continues to face major challenges. These include improving the scope, responsiveness and user friendliness of services to a wide range of customers against a backdrop of financial constraints, leading a major

programme of reform and ensuring that the Civil Service has the confidence and trust of a range of stakeholders and the wider NI community. The postholder must demonstrate the vision and enthusiasm to lead the organisation in addressing these challenges.

The post holder will also have a personal involvement in and commitment to the national and international dimension of the work of the Executive. At present that includes close co-operation with colleagues in the UK Government, devolved administrations in Scotland and Wales, the Irish Government and the wider representational role with offices currently in Washington, Beijing and Brussels.

An immediate priority will be managing the implementation and operation of the Ireland/NI Protocol in the UK/EU withdrawal agreement.



TERMS AND CONDITIONS

This is a permanent full-time appointment to the NICS Senior Civil Service (SCS) and the postholder will be an employee of the Executive Office.

FM and dFM will take an active role in this competition and make the final selection decision.

Salary

Salary will be within the range £160,563 - £188,272 within which pay progression will be performance related.

The successful candidate can expect to be placed at the minimum point of the payscale, although a higher starting salary within the range may be available if they have exceptionally relevant skills/experience. If the successful candidate is an existing NICS civil servant, starting pay on transfer to a new substantive grade will apply.

In order to comply with the disclosure requirements in our Annual Accounts, we will be required to disclose details of the total remuneration, including any taxable benefits in kind and pension benefits for this post in our annual accounts.

Further information may be disclosed in line with any future disclosure requirements relating to the senior management of departments. It is a condition attaching to the appointment to any SCS post in NI that appointees agree to these disclosure requirements.

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/landing-pages/civil-service-pensions-ni or if you are unable to access the website please contact Civil Service Pensions at Waterside House, 75 Duke Street, Londonderry, BT47 6FP.

Tel: 02871 319000

Email: cspensions.cpg@finance-ni.gov.uk

Location

The successful candidate will be based at Stormont Castle.

Holidays

In addition to public and privilege holidays, currently 12 days, the annual leave allowance will be 30 days.

Hours of Work

The normal conditioned hours of work are full-time: 37 hours net per week Monday to Friday. In common with all SCS appointments, the post-holder will be required to work outside their normal conditioned hours to fulfil the demands of the post.

Travel

The successful candidate will be expected to travel throughout NI and may be required to travel nationally and internationally on a regular basis.

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 Security Check (SC). Further detail on this check is provided on pages

8 and 9 of the Guidance for Applicants booklet.

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.

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. The successful candidate will also be required to sign a Register of Interests.

Further Information

Applicants wishing to learn more about the post before deciding to apply may email scsresourcing@finance-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 1300 330 or email recruitment@hrconnect.nigov.net



ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA

Applicants must, by the closing date for applications, provide evidence in their application form which demonstrates that they personally satisfy the following eligibility criteria*. Applicants, in seeking to provide evidence to satisfy the eligibility criteria, should take due cognisance of the key responsibilities for this post as outlined on pages 6 and 7.

Applicants must, by the closing date for applications, have:

1. A minimum of 5 years' senior management** experience of working at board level in either the public, private or voluntary sector, with evidence of effective, visible and inclusive leadership, in taking a major and diverse organisation through a period of significant change and reform.

AND

2. A demonstrable track record of clear and sustained corporate and personal leadership in a very complex, diverse and sensitive political environment, demonstrating integrity and resilience under high levels of scrutiny and sustained pressure.

AND

3. Evidence of successful development, brokering and implementation of corporate strategy to best enable the Executive's agreed outcomes and the delivery of public service in an effective and co-ordinated manner in a changing and challenging environment. This evidence must also include demonstrable effective analysis and judgement of competing priorities with credibility and at pace.

AND

4. Evidence of the ability to successfully build and engage diverse, inclusive and high performing teams to deliver within budget, inspiring collective effort and building corporate capability and capacity.

AND

5. Evidence of building and maintaining transparent relationships through effective inclusive communication, negotiating and influencing to achieve outcomes of societal well-being and delivery of real and positive changes in people's lives.

The following additional clarification is provided:-

*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 evidence of achievement/outcomes together with the appropriate dates to demonstrate that you meet the eligibility criteria the selection panel will reject your application.

****Senior management** includes taking decisions affecting, strategic issues concerning the corporate body or organisation within which an individual is working or providing detailed advice at board level on such issues.

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.

- Write down clearly your personal involvement in any experience you quote. Write "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



PERSON SPECIFICATION

Candidates will be expected to demonstrate the requirements set out in the Eligibility Criteria. In addition, during the selection process they will also be required to demonstrate the skills and competencies set out in the Northern Ireland Civil Service (NICS) competency framework at Level 6.

What is the NICS competency framework?

The 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. Competencies are the skills, knowledge and behaviours that lead to successful performance. The framework outlines ten competencies, which are grouped into three clusters as set out below. The competencies are intended to be discrete and cumulative, with each level building on the levels below i.e. a person demonstrating a competency at Level 6 should be demonstrating all levels as a matter of course.

How does the NICS framework look?

The NICS competency framework is divided into the following separate but supporting areas:

1. Strategic Cluster - Setting Direction

This cluster of competences focuses on strategic issues including:

- Seeing the big picture: This 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 and add value to the citizen, support economic, sustainable growth and help to deliver the Northern Ireland Executive's priorities;
- Changing and improving: 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; and
- Making effective 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.

2. People Cluster - Engaging People

Every civil servant needs certain core skills to work effectively with others. The key skills appropriate for this competency include:

- **Leading and Communicating:** At senior levels, this 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;
- **Collaborating and Partnering:** This is about delivering 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; and

- **Building Capacity for all:** At senior levels this is about ensuring a diverse blend of capability and skills is identified and developed to meet current and future business needs. It is also about creating a learning and knowledge culture across all levels in the organisation to inform future plans and transformational change.

3. Performance Cluster – Delivering Results

Evidence of effectiveness in this area includes delivering operational excellence, often through partnership working whilst demonstrating value for money. The key competences required include:

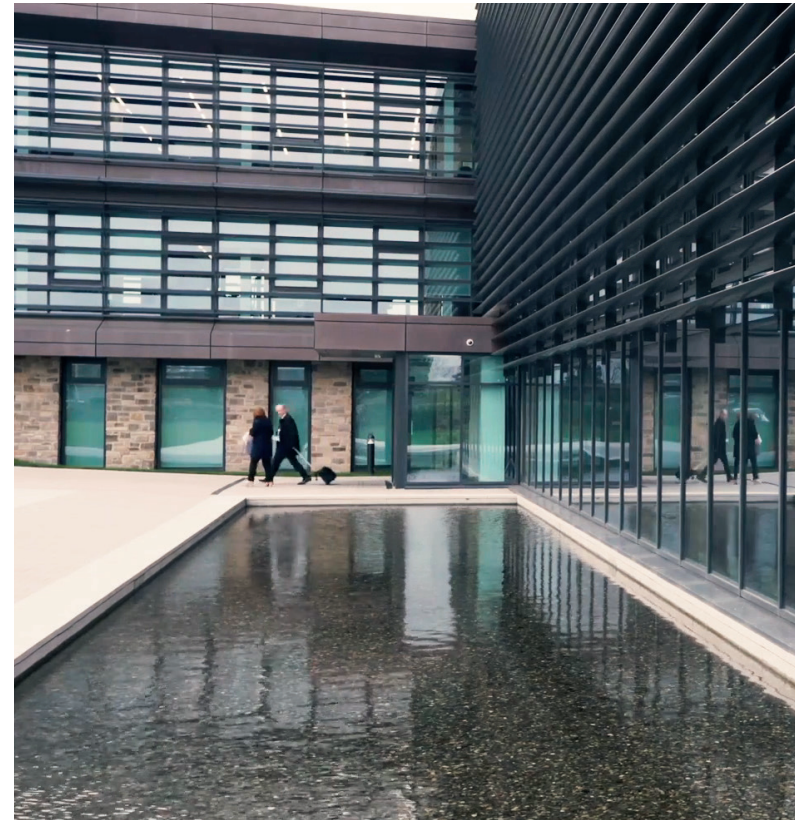
- **Delivering Value for Money:** The ability to embed a culture of value for money within an area/ function, and working collaboratively across boundaries to ensure that the NICS maximises its strategic outcomes within the resources available;
- **Managing a Quality Service:** At a senior level, this is about creating an environment to deliver operational excellence and creating the most appropriate and cost effective delivery models for public services;

- Delivering at Pace: This is about building a performance culture to deliver outcomes with a firm focus on prioritisation and addressing performance issues resolutely, fairly and promptly; and
- Achieving Outcomes through Delivery Partners; At a senior level, this 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.

Further information on the NICS competency framework as it applies to this post can be obtained by accessing:

<https://irecruit-ext.hrconnect.nigov.net/resources/documents/n/i/c/nics-cf.pdf>

If you have any queries related to accessing the NICS competency framework, contact HRConnect on 0800 1 300 330 or email recruitment@hrconnect.nigov.net



SELECTION PROCESS

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.

Overview of Selection Process

The selection process for this competition will include an eligibility sift, two interviews plus a psychometric assessment. Those candidates who meet the eligibility requirements will undertake a psychological personality assessment ahead of the first stage interview. Candidates successful at the first interview stage will be invited to final interview with FM and dFM. The timetable and selection process for this competition are detailed below;

Eligibility/sift	3 August 2020
Invitations to interview and personality questionnaire issued to candidates	7 August 2020
Personality questionnaire completed	10 August 2020
Interview with occupational psychologist	By 14 August 2020
1st stage interviews	26 August 2020
1st stage interview results issued	1 September 2020
2nd stage interviews	w/c 14 September 2020

1. Formal screening of applications

Applications can be submitted online or by hard copy and will receive a confirmation of submission. All applications received by the closing date will be screened to check that they have been fully completed and to ensure that the information provided demonstrates that the nationality requirements for appointment to the NICS are met.

2. Eligibility Sift

All valid applications will be considered by the selection panel to determine if they meet the eligibility criteria. Only those who have sufficiently demonstrated on their application form that they meet the eligibility criteria will be invited to the first stage interview.

3. Psychological Personality Assessment

An Occupational Psychologist will assist the NICS in facilitating this element of the selection process.

Candidates should note that contact details provided on their application form will be made available to the Occupational Psychologist to facilitate these arrangements, as appropriate.

The findings of a personality assessment questionnaire and follow up interview with the Occupational Psychologist will be used to inform the first stage selection panel on areas to explore further at interview.



4. First stage interview

The first stage interview will be carried out by a panel chaired by a Civil Service Commissioner. This panel will assess if applicants meet the standard required to progress to the second stage interview with Ministers. The panel will assess if the candidates meet a pre-agreed required competency standard. Only those candidates who meet the standard will proceed to the next stage of the competition.

Candidates should note that due to current circumstances with COVID-19, social distancing measures will be put in place. If this is not possible the use of video technology may be used as an alternative.

It is intended that the first stage interviews for this post will take place on 26 August 2020. As this competition is being run to tight timelines, there will be no possibility for interviews to be rescheduled.

The first stage interview will consist of a presentation and a competence based interview.

Presentation

Before the competence based interview candidates will be required to deliver a time limited presentation of no more than 8 minutes. Following the presentation the panel will ask questions on the detail of the presentation. The presentation topic will be provided on the day of interview and 30 minutes preparation time will be given. A flipchart and writing materials will be provided for candidates' use. No other materials or visual aids will be permitted. No personal documentation may be brought in to the pre-interview room. The only materials candidates will be permitted to bring into interview will be those prepared in the pre-interview room.

The presentation will be utilised to assess the **Seeing the Big Picture** and **Leading and Communicating** competences.

First Interview Criteria

The selection panel will design questions to test the applicant's knowledge and experience in each of the areas below.

- Achieving Outcomes Through Delivery Partners
- Collaborating and Partnering
- Building Capability for All
- Delivering at Pace
- Delivering Value for Money
- Managing a Quality Service
- Making Effective Decisions
- Changing and Improving

5. Second stage interview

The FM and dFM will co-chair the second stage interview. There will be no other panel members. An independent note taker will be present at the interview. Only those candidates who meet the standard at the first stage will proceed to the second stage.

The panel will ask questions based on four key areas, from the NICS competency framework and score each candidate accordingly.

It is intended that the second stage interviews for this post will take place in Belfast in early September 2020. There will be no possibility for interviews to be rescheduled.

Second Stage Interview Criteria

- Seeing the Big Picture

The successful candidate will need to completely understand the political context within which he/she will work and be able to lead on the delivery of the new outcomes-based Programme for Government, and an ongoing programme of NICS reform.

Marks available: 20

Minimum standard: 14

- Leading and Communicating

The successful candidate will need to be a highly articulate individual who has undoubted presence and gravitas, and has a clear vision for delivering for the citizens of Northern Ireland. They will need to show that they can visibly lead the NICS through a

major programme of change without compromising on delivery and can influence and negotiate with diverse stakeholder groups and will inspire others to success.

Marks available: 20 Minimum standard: 14

- Delivering at Pace

The successful candidate must display the ability to create a performance culture with a specific focus on outcomes. They must be able to set a clear direction

for others and remain focussed on achieving strategic priorities irrespective of external challenges.

Marks available: 20 Minimum standard: 14

- Making Effective Decisions

The candidate must display sound judgement and the ability to make decisions based on evaluating risks and options. The candidate should involve others as appropriate in decision making processes and have the



ability to give unbiased advice to Ministers based on robust analysis.

Marks available: 20 Minimum standard: 14

Total Marks Available: 80 Overall Pass Mark: 56

To be deemed as successful, candidates must achieve all individual minimum standards and also achieve an overall pass mark of 56.

6. Order of merit

The second selection panel will assess candidates against the interview criteria. Those candidates who meet the required standard and pass mark will be deemed suitable for appointment. This selection panel will then list those suitable for appointment in order of merit with the highest scoring applicant ranked first. The order of merit is valid for one year.

Should circumstances arise whereby a new First Minister and deputy First Minister has been appointed and the HOCS position becomes vacant it may be necessary to initiate a new competition given that serving Ministers may not have taken an active role in the process.

