

**Candidate
Information
Booklet**

IRC217558

**Non-Executive Members of Audit
Committees and Boards**

**Northern Ireland Government
Departments**

**Completed Application Forms
must be returned to
HRConnect no later than 12
noon (UK time) on
Wednesday 19th April 2017**

Northern Ireland Civil Service

**Creating opportunity, realising
potential, achieving excellence**

Communication between HRConnect and you

HRConnect will issue electronically as many competition communications as possible – you should therefore check your email account 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

	Page
Foreword	3
About this Competition	4
Background	6
Eligibility Criteria	9
Completing Your Application	11
Terms and Conditions	14
Other Information	15
Annex	18

FOREWORD

The work of Northern Ireland Government departments impacts on every aspect of life in Northern Ireland. Each department plays a pivotal role in supporting the Northern Ireland Executive to serve the people of Northern Ireland by delivering high-quality public services.

In order to promote the efficient and effective use of public money, formal structures are in place to oversee the work of each department and ensure that appropriate controls are in place. Departmental Boards play a key role in this regard by providing the collective strategic and operational leadership for the department. Each Board is in turn supported by an Audit and Risk Assurance Committee, which provides feedback and assurance in relation to governance issues and risk management processes.

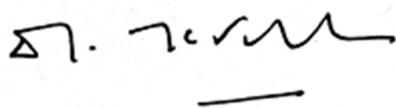
Given the strategic importance of these functions, Northern Ireland departments include Non-Executive Members on their Committees and Boards to bring an external and independent perspective to the analysis of issues. Such Members perform an extremely valuable role by using their experience to support and challenge Government officials in their role. The external view that they bring adds significantly to the corporate decision-making process and enables the Accounting Officer to gain the assurance they need on governance and risk management issues.

The role of a Non-Executive Member of a departmental Audit Committee and/or Board may be suited to you if you are someone that:

- is interested in ensuring that public services are delivered in the most effective and efficient way;
- has an inquiring and inquisitive mind, with an ability to assimilate, assess and analyse complex information;
- possesses high ethical standards, sound judgement and the ability to communicate ideas; and
- can think creatively and have an ability to take the wider, strategic view.

This competition represents an exciting and valuable opportunity to make a real difference to the running of a Government department and to ensure that public resources are managed effectively.

Thank you for your interest in the role of Non-Executive Member and best wishes with your application.



Sir Malcolm McKibbin
Head of the Northern Ireland Civil Service

ABOUT THIS COMPETITION

The recruitment competition for Non-Executive Members of departmental Audit Committees and Boards is a two-stage process.

First Stage

The first stage of the recruitment competition is being managed by HRConnect, our partner in delivering recruitment services for the Northern Ireland Civil Service.

At this stage applicants will be asked to declare that, if appointed, they would uphold the seven principles of public life (see Annex for further details). They will also be assessed against the eligibility criteria based on the evidence which they have provided in their application form. The applicants who score the highest against these criteria, and who meet the minimum standard for each criterion, will be placed in a candidate pool. Northern Ireland departments will use this pool to fill vacancies as they arise.

The pool of successful candidates will remain live for three years.

Second Stage

When departments are seeking to fill a specific role, they will advise the candidate pool of the vacancy and invite interested candidates to apply. Those applying will be further assessed on the requirements of each role as determined by the relevant department. The second stage of the selection process will also include an interview.

At interview you will be asked about your understanding of the standards of behaviour required of appointees. You will also be asked if you have any business or personal interests that might be relevant to the work of the appointing department and which could lead to a real or perceived conflict of interest were you to be appointed. In addition, you will be asked if there is anything in your professional or personal history, which if brought into the public domain, may cause embarrassment or disrepute to the organisation. The interview panel will explore any such issues in order to judge if the public would have confidence in your appointment.

Second stage competitions may be managed by HRConnect or by individual departments and will use the same pool of eligible candidates.

Appointees may only hold one departmental post. Therefore, if successful in being appointed, your name will be removed from the remaining pool of eligible candidates.

Merit Principle

NICS departments are committed to encouraging a diverse range of applicants for these positions and to the principle of appointment on merit following an open

and transparent process. Only those individuals judged to best meet the requirements of the post will be recommended at each stage of the competition.

Applications are welcomed from all backgrounds regardless of religious belief, gender, disability, ethnic origin, political opinion, age, marital status, sexual orientation, or whether or not you have dependants. **Applications are particularly welcome from women, people with disabilities and people under 40 years of age as these groups are currently underrepresented.**

Further Information on the Recruitment Process

This Candidate Information Booklet should provide all the information you need regarding this first stage competition.

However, if you have any queries on the process please contact HRConnect on 0800 1 300 330 or recruitment@hrconnect.nigov.net. Please note we are unable to provide advice on suitability of evidence on your application form.

BACKGROUND

Northern Ireland Civil Service

The principal functions of the Northern Ireland Civil Service (NICS) are to provide support to the Ministers of the Northern Ireland Executive and to deliver a wide range of public services to the people of Northern Ireland. The work of the NICS varies across the many different aspects of Government and will touch on the day-to-day lives of every person in Northern Ireland in some way.

Northern Ireland Government Departments

There are nine Government departments, each of which is headed by a Permanent Secretary who, as accounting officer, is responsible for making sure that money allocated to the department is spent appropriately.

The nine departments are:

- Executive Office
- Department for Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs
- Department for Communities
- Department for the Economy
- Department of Education
- Department of Finance
- Department of Health
- Department for Infrastructure
- Department of Justice

Further information on the Northern Ireland departments can be obtained on the NIDirect website at www.nidirect.gov.uk.

The Audit and Risk Assurance Committee (ARAC)

The Audit and Risk Assurance Committee is an essential part of a department's governance and control framework – the system by which the department is directed and controlled. It is an independent and objective committee which supports the departmental Accounting Officer and Board by reviewing the comprehensiveness and reliability of assurances on governance, risk management, the control environment and the integrity of financial statements and the annual report.

Role of Non-Executive Members

Non-Executive Members complement the balance of skills and experience of Government officials on the ARAC by bringing an independent, external perspective to the work of the Committee. The value of the Non-Executive Member lies in the constructive challenge function and the fresh, objective viewpoint that they provide. Non-Executive Members of the Audit Committee are responsible for advising the Accounting Officer and Board on:

- the strategic processes for risk, control and governance and the Governance Statement;
- the accounting policies, the accounts and the annual report of the organisation, including the process for review of the accounts prior to submission for audit, levels of error identified, and management's letter of representation to the External Auditors;
- the planned activity and results of both Internal and External Audit;
- adequacy of management response to issues identified by audit activity, including External Audit's management letter;
- assurances relating to the management of risk and corporate governance requirements for the organisation and its sponsored bodies;
- actions related to the management of IT and cyber risks;
- (where appropriate) proposals for tendering for either Internal or External Audit services; and
- anti-fraud policies, whistle-blowing processes and arrangements for special investigations.

In addition:

- the ARAC will periodically review its own effectiveness and report the results of that review to the Board; and
- Non-Executive ARAC Members will be required to sit on Departmental Boards and may be asked to join Agency Boards and/or Agency Audit and Risk Assurance Committees. Appointees may also be required to chair ARAC meetings.

Departmental/Agency Boards

Departmental or Agency Boards are usually chaired by the Permanent Secretary or Chief Executive and are comprised of senior officials from the organisation and two Non-Executive Members from the ARAC. They provide the collective strategic and operational leadership in support of the Minister. The role of each Board includes:

- setting the strategic direction for the department/agency, including its vision, values and strategic objectives;
- developing and overseeing the implementation of policies and programmes in line with the department's/agency's strategic direction;
- monitoring performance against corporate plans, budgets and targets;

- overseeing the strategic management of the department's/agency's staff, finance, information and physical resources; and
- establishing and overseeing the implementation of the department's corporate governance arrangements, including risk management.

Role of Non-Executive Members

The role of Non-Executive Members on a Departmental or Agency Board entails specific responsibilities. These can include:

- assisting and advising on the development of departmental business and strategic plans;
- monitoring and challenging the department's performance in relation to its objectives and commitments;
- active participation in the planning of departmental budgets and in financial decisions;
- identifying and advising on new challenges, initiatives and opportunities;
- challenging the quality of policy making; and
- representing the department as required.

Vacancies

It is currently predicted that there will be at least 20 vacancies over the three-year life of the successful candidate pool.

ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA

A criteria-based selection procedure will be employed to identify suitable candidates for these positions. The application form is an essential element of this process and is designed to require applicants to give specific examples of past performance to demonstrate their ability or competence.

In this stage of the selection process, applicants must demonstrate how they meet the criteria below. Examples and supporting evidence may be taken from a wide variety of sources and experiences, including the applicant's career, voluntary work, or participation on other boards or committees.

Please take full advantage of the opportunity to provide practical evidence and examples of how and why you consider you are suitable for the post. These examples as provided will inform the selection process.

ESSENTIAL CRITERIA

Applicants must, by the closing date for applications, demonstrate evidence on their application form of:

Part A (all 3 to be completed)

1. Demonstrable experience of adopting a risk based approach to the management of an organisation and of ensuring that adequate controls are in place to mitigate risks.

Marks Available: 20 Minimum Standard: 12

2. The ability to process and analyse complex information, apply sound judgement and contribute to collective decision making.

Marks Available: 20 Minimum Standard: 12

3. Senior level* experience in the private, public or third sector, with a strategic knowledge of operating in challenging environments and implementing major change initiatives.

Marks Available: 20 Minimum Standard: 12

Part B (complete 1 only of the following 3 options)

4. Detailed understanding and experience of public sector finances and reporting, including a thorough knowledge of accountability structures.

OR

5. Experience of reviewing and evaluating financial statements that demonstrates a broad knowledge of complex accounting issues.

OR

6. Knowledge and awareness of IT and cyber security issues and the ability to provide advice at senior level in relation to the management of IT and cyber risks.

Marks Available: 20 Minimum Standard: 12

* Experience at senior level is defined as experience at board level or experience reporting directly to a board in an executive or other advisory role.

A sift panel will score applications against each of the selection criteria in Part A above and against one of the criteria in Part B above. Applicants are only required to fill in one option from Part B and should note that where more than one criteria has been completed for Part B, the panel will only score one of these i.e. the first criterion in Part B that has been completed. Where applicants complete additional criterion in Part B, the information contained in the remaining criterion will be disregarded.

It is currently envisaged that there will be multiple panels conducting the sift exercise and that the top scoring applicants, from each panel, who have met the minimum standard for all selection criteria, will be placed in a candidate pool. Northern Ireland departments will use this pool to fill vacancies during the second stage of the competition.

Please note that information relating to applicants in the candidate pool will be passed to the relevant departments for the second stage of the competition.

COMPLETING YOUR APPLICATION

It is essential that the evidence provided in application forms includes sufficient detail and context to clearly demonstrate how you meet the criteria. Evidence must include references to specific examples of experience, actions, timescales/dates and achievements. The panel will not make any assumptions about your role and can only assess you on the information provided.

Guidance for Applicants

- The space available on the application form is the same for all applicants and must not be altered.
- We will not accept CVs, letters, additional pages or any other supplementary material in place of or in addition to completed application forms.
- If you are completing a hard copy application form, please use either typescript font size 12, or legible, block capitals using black ink.
- Applicants must not reformat application forms.
- 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.
- Please avoid the use of acronyms, complex technical detail etc. Assume the reader does not know your employer, your job, or the boards or committees you were involved with.
- You can use examples from your working life, where appropriate, or from your personal life, including any voluntary or community work you are or have been involved in.
- It is not appropriate simply to list the various posts that you have held as evidence against a criterion. Assumptions will not be made from the title of the post or the nature of the organisation as to the experience, qualities and skills gained.
- The application form asks you to give practical examples of past experience to demonstrate your ability or competence. It's not just what you have done but also how you did it and the level of responsibility held.
- The examples you provide should be concise and relevant to the criteria. It is your *unique* role that the panel are interested in, not that of your team or division.

The following model may help you to structure your examples for each criterion and express them in a logical manner:-

Challenge: Describe a specific example(s) that relates to the criterion. Use actual examples, rather than 'how you would do something'.

Context: Explain the context or background to the example. Who else was involved? What were the particular circumstances etc? (e.g.

colleagues, clients, shrinking budget, low morale.) Who were the principal decision makers?

Action: Outline the specific **actions you took** to meet the challenge and how you behaved. If your example includes activities undertaken by a team, focus on **your unique role** and not that of the team as a whole. Avoid statements that describe your personal beliefs or philosophies.

Result: Describe the result or outcome of your actions and lessons you have taken from the example.

Application Form Submission

- Please refer to the Candidate Information Booklet before completing an application.
- All applications must be received by the advertised closing date. Late applications or applications received by fax or by email will not be accepted.
- Only the employment history and eligibility sections will be made available to the panel.
- Applicants are encouraged to submit online applications wherever possible. However, all requests for hard copy application packs are welcomed and all applications will be treated equally regardless of whether they are hard copy or online.
- 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.
- Please note the session timeout for the online application is 40 minutes. If you do not save or change a page within this time, you will automatically be logged out and any unsaved work will be lost.

Disability Requirements

Any candidate who because of a disability cannot complete the application form in its current format should contact HRConnect.

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.

Completed hard copy application forms can be returned by post or hand delivered to the address below:

**HRConnect
PO Box 1089
2nd Floor
The Metro Building
6-9 Donegall Square South
Belfast
BT1 9EW**

Please note:

- We will not accept application forms received after the closing date or reformatted application forms. You should check that the form is fully completed before being submitted.
- Applicants using Royal Mail should note that 1st class mail does not guarantee next day delivery. It is your responsibility to ensure that sufficient postage is paid and the form is received by HRConnect by the closing date.
- We will not accept any application where we are asked to pay any shortfall in postage. Such applications will be deemed as refused.

TERMS AND CONDITIONS FOR NON-EXECUTIVE MEMBERS OF DEPARTMENTAL AUDIT COMMITTEES AND BOARDS

Status

Non-Executive Members of departmental Audit Committees and Boards are not public appointments, nor do they constitute employment, but they are subject to civil service rules on conduct and political activity.

Tenure

Most appointments will be for an initial period of three years, which may be extended in further defined periods by agreement. The maximum total term of appointment is six years.

In addition to filling Non-Executive vacancies in Audit Committees and Boards of core departments, this recruitment process may also be used to fill vacancies on the Boards and Audit and Risk Assurance Committees of departmental agencies and directorates. Accordingly, any reference to department should be taken to include boards and committees of agencies and directorates.

Fees

The fees payable in relation to these responsibilities will be in the region of £500 per day (or equivalent), plus expenses. One day's payment will normally cover attendance at a Committee or Board meeting, including preparation time for meetings and actions arising. All remuneration and expenses are subject to deduction of income tax and national insurance. The time commitment is typically 20-25 days annually.

Travel and subsistence expenses are payable at Northern Ireland Civil Service (NICS) rates.

Location / Travel

Meetings will typically be held at departmental headquarters in the Greater Belfast and the North West region. However, on occasions, meetings may take place at other departmental offices throughout Northern Ireland.

The successful candidate must have access to a form of transport which will enable them to fulfil their duties.

OTHER INFORMATION

Communication between HRConnect and You

HRConnect will issue as many competition communications as possible via email if you have provided an email address on your application form. You should therefore check your email account to make sure that you do not miss any important communications in relation to this competition.

For certain types of correspondence (e.g. where we need you to complete an additional form) we may issue some correspondence by post.

Changes to Your Contact Details

Please inform HRConnect immediately of any changes to your contact details.

Feedback

We are committed to providing feedback in respect of decisions taken in determining eligibility. Feedback in respect of eligibility will be communicated automatically to those candidates who fail to satisfy any criteria. All requests for feedback are welcome.

Legal Entitlement to Work in the UK

Departments must ensure that anyone it appoints is not subject to any form of immigration control. Advice on your entitlement to work in the UK can be obtained from the following website www.ind.homeoffice.gov.uk.

Former NICS Employees

Former NICS employees are eligible to apply subject to the rules on accepting appointments after leaving the NICS.

Criminal Records Check

Successful applicants will be subject to a criminal records check at the second stage of the process.

Probity and Conflicts of Interest

Departments must ensure that the individuals it appoints are committed to the principles and values of public service. These principles are: selflessness, integrity, objectivity, accountability, openness, honesty and leadership.

During the second stage of this competition, an interview panel will determine whether you are aware of the standards of behaviour required of appointees and can demonstrate your understanding of the issue. You will also be asked to declare whether or not you are involved, or have been involved, in activities that could call into question your reputation and/or damage the reputation of the

department to which you are applying. The interview panel will also consider any actual, or perceived, conflicts of interest.

What is a conflict of interest?

These appointments require the highest standards of propriety, involving impartiality, integrity and objectivity, in relation to the stewardship of public funds and the oversight and management of related activities. This means that any private, voluntary, charitable or political interest which might be material and relevant to the work of an appointing department should be examined.

There is always the possibility for real or perceived conflicts of interest to arise. Both are a problem, as the perceived inference of a conflict may, on occasions, be as damaging as the existence of a real conflict.

No-one should use, or give the appearance of using, their public position to further their private interests. This is an area of particular importance, as it is of considerable concern to the public and receives much media attention. It is important, therefore, that you examine your circumstances when applying for these positions and consider any potential conflicts of interest, whether real or perceived.

If successfully admitted to the candidate pool, you will be required to declare on the second stage application form any personal or business interests which are, or could be perceived as, a conflict of interest with the potential to influence your judgement in that particular post. Conflicts of interest are not necessarily a barrier to appointment, but both real and perceived conflicts, if viewed as relevant, must be explored by the interview panel to ensure that the public can have confidence in the appointee's independence and impartiality.

Any applicant who has held an elected or appointed position at senior level in an organisation linked to a particular department may not be eligible for appointment to that department. However, the applicant would still be eligible to apply for vacancies in other departments, if this conflict of interest did not apply to them.

Equality Information

Departments are keen to encourage applicants from all sections of society and we are interested in monitoring all applicants in order to see how effective we have been. As such, we would like to ask you to complete the Equal Opportunity Monitoring Form which is attached to the application form. **Please note, the monitoring form is not regarded as part of your application and is voluntary.** It is not made available to the selection panel and does not play a role in the decision-making process. All applications for appointment are considered strictly on the basis of merit.

Disability

The Disability Discrimination Act 1995 defines disability as a “physical or mental impairment, which has a substantial and long-term adverse effect on a person’s ability to carry out normal day to day activities.”

This definition is interpreted as follows:-

Physical Impairment: this includes, for instance, a weakening of part of the body (eyes, ears, limbs, internal organs etc) caused through illness by accident or from birth.

Mental Impairment: this includes mental ill health and what is commonly known as learning disability.

Substantial: put simply, this means the effect of the physical or mental impairment on ability to carry out normal day to day activities is more than minor or trivial. It does not have to be a severe effect.

Long-term adverse effect: the effect has to have lasted or be likely to last overall for at least 12 months and the effect must be a detrimental one.

A normal day to day activity: this is something which is carried out by most people on a fairly regular and frequent basis such as washing, eating, catching a bus or turning on a television. It does not mean something so individual as playing a musical instrument to a professional standard or doing everything involved in a particular job.

Contact Details

If you have any queries regarding the competition process, or to request feedback, please contact HRConnect at the address below:

HRConnect
PO Box 1089
2nd Floor
The Metro Building
6-9 Donegall Square South
Belfast
BT1 9EW

Or by:

Email: recruitment@hrconnect.nigov.net
Tel: 0800 1 300 330
Fax: 028 9024 1665

The Seven Principles Underpinning Public Life

In 1995, the Committee on Standards in Public Life defined seven principles, which should underpin the actions of all who serve the public in any way. These are:

- **Selflessness** – holders of public office should take decisions solely in terms of the public interest.
- **Integrity** – holders of public office must avoid placing themselves under any obligation to people or organisations that might try inappropriately to influence them in their work. They should not act or take decisions in order to gain financial or other material benefits for themselves, their family, or their friends. They must declare and resolve any interests and relationships.
- **Objectivity** – holders of public office must act and take decisions impartially, fairly and on merit, using the best evidence and without discrimination or bias.
- **Accountability** – holders of public office are accountable to the public for their decisions and actions and must submit themselves to the scrutiny necessary to ensure this.
- **Openness** – holders of public office should act and take decisions in an open and transparent manner. Information should not be withheld from the public unless there are clear and lawful reasons for so doing.
- **Honesty** – holders of public office should be truthful.
- **Leadership** – Holders of public office should exhibit these principles in their own behaviour. They should actively promote and robustly support the principles and be willing to challenge poor behaviour wherever it occurs.

As part of the selection process, you will be tested on your commitment to maintaining high standards in public life with particular emphasis on probity issues and conflicts of interest.