

**Candidate  
Information  
Booklet**

**IRC238242**

**Chief Plant Health Officer, Grade 6**

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

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

**Friday 23<sup>rd</sup> August 2019**

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

Department of Agriculture,  
Environment & Rural Affairs  
(DAERA)

**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

It is my pleasure as Chief Executive of the Forest Service, an Agency of the Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs (DAERA), to offer this exciting and unique opportunity for a highly motivated and committed person to head up the plant health profession in Northern Ireland (NI). The successful candidate will assume the role of Chief Plant Health Officer (CPHO) within the Agency, leading a Division of 40 staff with responsibilities for plant health policy, legislation and regulation for Northern Ireland.

The CPHO will provide leadership and direction within the Plant Health Division in implementing all aspects of plant health work within the Agency. He or she will lead on setting the direction and development of a long term, strategic post EU exit Plant Health policy, through effective engagement and collaboration with colleagues, other Departments and key stakeholder representatives. He or she will command the confidence of plant health professionals nationally and internationally in delivering a well informed and comprehensive plant health policy and regulatory control programme for NI.

The post holder will have a lead role in managing required changes to regulatory regimes, improving industry preparedness for and resilience to disease and a clear leadership role as a Senior UK Plant Health Professional<sup>1</sup>. He or she will be required to secure compliance with regulatory controls, and achieve clear stakeholder support for an effective control regime and enforcement action through leadership, authoritative communication and engagement.

As an Executive Director of the Forest Service Management Board the CPHO will play a key role in contributing to the strategic direction, leadership, governance and accountability of the Forest Service, and as such will:

- support the process of change, encouraging innovation and where appropriate enterprise, to enhance the organisation's capacity to deliver improved services and organisational effectiveness;
- contribute to the assessment and management of the risks associated with delivery of the Agency's delivery functions, finance and governance; and
- serve on important Board committees, principally the Forest Service Risk and Governance Committee.

I look forward to receiving applications from those seeking this unique challenge to lead the plant health profession and contribute to the very diverse and exciting work of the Forest Service Agency at this senior level.

John Joe O'Boyle  
Chief Executive  
Forest Service

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

## **BACKGROUND**

The Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs (DAERA) has responsibility for food, farming, environmental, fisheries, forestry and sustainability policy and the development of the rural sector in Northern Ireland. The Department assists the sustainable development of the agri-food, environmental, fishing and forestry sectors of the Northern Ireland economy, having regard for the needs of the consumers, the protection of human, animal and plant health, the welfare of animals and the conservation and enhancement of the environment.

DAERA provides 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 is responsible to the Department of the Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Defra) in Great Britain for the administration of schemes affecting the whole of the United Kingdom. The Department also oversees the application of European Union agricultural, environmental, fisheries and rural development policy to Northern Ireland.

The Department is currently preparing for BREXIT working closely with our partners in Northern Ireland and with colleagues in the other UK Administrations.

## **DAERA VISION AND STRATEGIC GOALS**

### **Vision**

“A living, working, active landscape valued by everyone”

### **Strategic Outcomes**

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

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

- Forest Service, Rural Affairs and Estate Transformation Group;
- Central Services and Contingency Planning Group;
- Veterinary Service Animal Health Group;
- Environment Marine and Fisheries Group; and
- Food and Farming Group.

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

- Northern Ireland Environment Agency (NIEA)
- Forest Service

The Department also sponsors a number of NDPBs including the Agri-food and Biosciences Institute (AFBI).

The Permanent Secretary of DAERA is Dr Denis McMahon.

## **FOREST SERVICE**

- The Forest Service is an Agency of DAERA and is part of DAERA's Forest Service, Rural Affairs and Estate Transformation Group.

### **Forest Service key functions are:**

- To promote forest expansion primarily through grant aid;
- To sustainably manage and protect the Department's forests to provide economic, social and environmental benefits to Northern Ireland society;
- To promote formal partnership working on forestry lands to supply timber, provide access and enhance biodiversity;
- To provide and implement an effective plant health regulatory framework to protect the productive capacity of agriculture and forestry lands in Northern Ireland, as part of the UK Plant Health Service.
- Verify sustainable management performance through a process of independent audit against the UK Woodland Assurance Standard<sup>2</sup> and
- Release land from forestry for renewable energy generation and environmental improvement.

Forest Service is a multidisciplinary organisation whose staff are employees of the Department and are drawn mainly from forestry, agriculture and administrative disciplines. It has responsibility for forestry and plant health, and is developing a wind-energy programme.

The Forest Service is the responsibility of the Chief Executive (CE), who is also the Chief Forest Officer (CFO) and Agency Accounting Officer. The CE is subject to the overall direction of the Minister who determines the policy framework within which the Agency operates, the level of resources made available each year, and the scope of Agency activities. The Minister approves the Business Plan, sets the key performance targets and monitors the Agency's performance. The Agency's broad business strategy is to engage partners from industry, local government and the charitable sectors in

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<sup>2</sup> <http://ukwas.org.uk/>

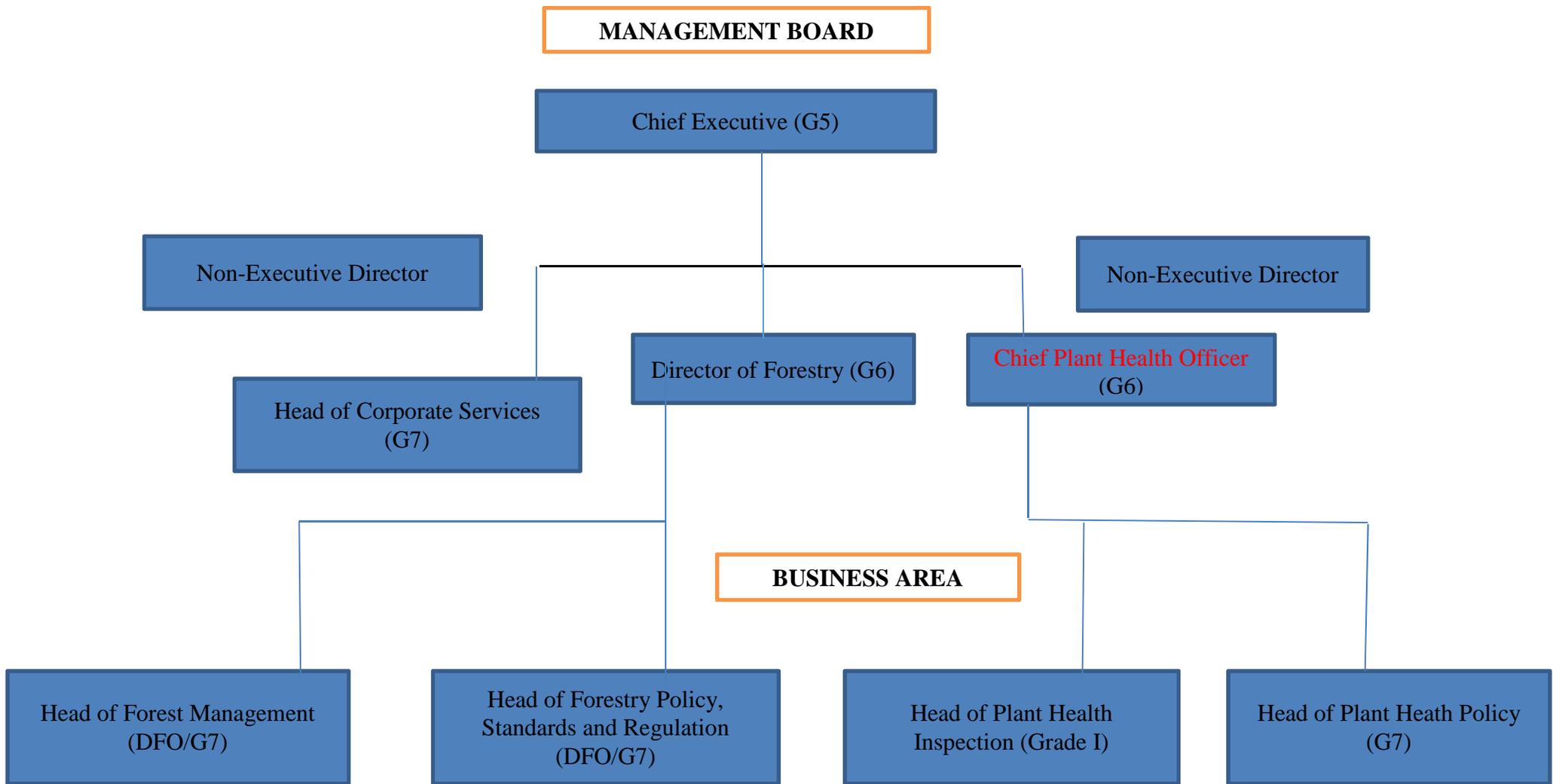
its work, and build resilience in industry. It applies professional standards to its work and ensures that people working in the industry are suitably trained and equipped.

The Forest Service provides Phytosanitary controls for Northern Ireland. This has an impact, for example, on the ambitions of the Northern Ireland Agri-food Sector to develop and grow trade through export growth, and cross-border movement of timber, because of the links and interdependencies between Northern Ireland and global markets for plant products, and the changing relationships between the UK and its trading partners. Supply chains are complex and long, they present the major pathway for pests and diseases entering Northern Ireland, and trading partners similarly require assurances that trade with NI presents no risk to their territories.

Phytosanitary controls are the responsibility of the Agency's Plant Health Division, operating as an integral part of the UK Plant Health Service to implement the EU Plant Health Regulations and Directives. The Division is engaging on a transformational plant health and future relationship frameworks programme. The programme will strengthen strategically critical external and stakeholder relations, support the work of the Agency and the CE responsibilities to the DAERA Brexit Programme Board. It will ensure that the Division adjusts its systems to maintain focus and prepare effective arrangements within which phytosanitary controls will be implemented when the UK exits the EU.

**The key tasks to deliver the Minister's plant health policies are:**

1. To promote a risk management approach to plant health regulation based on scientific evidence;
2. To provide and implement a regulatory framework, inspection programmes and administrative processes that enable compliance with legislation on plant and bee health, horticulture marketing standards and forest reproductive materials; and
3. To maintain the legislative and knowledge base needed to inform policy development and the Agency's work.



## KEY RESPONSIBILITIES

The purpose of the post is to facilitate trade in plants and plant products by providing expert official assurance about disease, by safeguarding our environment, agriculture and forests through official inspection of goods entering the territory, and by surveillance and management of disease outbreaks. The Chief Plant Health Officer (CPHO) provides leadership and direction within the Plant Health Division in implementing all aspects of Plant Health work within the Agency.

The CPHO will lead and fully integrate policy and delivery functions to provide the CE and the Minister with authoritative advice, which has the confidence of industry and other stakeholders, and which delivers an effective regulatory service achieved with proportionate effort and cost. He or she 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>3</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 post-holder, on behalf of Forest Service, will be expected to lead on Phytosanitary 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 in the EU, across the devolved administrations and 3<sup>rd</sup> countries.

He or she 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 post-holder will understand, anticipate and communicate the essential trade pathways and risks to inform decision makers.

The main responsibilities are:

### **Advice**

The CPHO provides high quality strategic and professional advice to the CE and the Minister;

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

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<sup>3</sup> <https://www.rsb.org.uk/careers-and-cpd/registers/plant-health-register>

## **Governance**

### The CPHO

- provides Stewardship of the Agency's Plant Health Division, ensures that regulation is appropriate and effective, and that there is a strategic match between the plant health programme, the DAERA vision and strategic aims and the Programme for Government;
- ensures that expenditure represents value for money and meets the standards for regularity and propriety in the public service;
- is an Executive Director of Forest Service; and
- provides assurance to the UK CPHO as required.

## **Leadership/Management**

The CPHO is head of the plant health division and leads 40 staff and is head of the Plant Health Directorate in the Northern Ireland Civil Service. He/she will command the confidence of plant health professionals and the multi-disciplinary team to plan and deliver a comprehensive programme across the plant health agenda.

He/she:

- 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 Forest Service Director 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;
- communicates decisions to Divisional staff, industry and stakeholders, so that resources can be organised to respond in a timely and comprehensive fashion to new disease findings and trade patterns;
- draws on his/her knowledge and experience of disease to advise the CE in discharging his/her responsibilities for the Agency; and
- provides advice to the Minister, Permanent Secretary, CE and Senior colleagues as appropriate.

## **Relationships**

- 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, and supports the Minister and CE;
- builds and maintains effective working relationships with external stakeholders to inform the evidence-based development of plant health policy; and
- leads on engaging and working in partnership with a wide range of stakeholders to achieve goals and outcomes relevant to plant health policy.

## **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**

This post will be based at Dundonald House, Belfast. As the Department is undergoing organisational change the location of the post may be subject to future change.

### **Salary**

Salary will be within the range £57,525 - £64,779 (under review) 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**

Access to a form of transport will be required in order to fulfil the responsibilities of this post.

Travel throughout Northern Ireland will be required and travel nationally and internationally may also be required.

## **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 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.

### **Further Information**

Applicants wishing to learn more about the post before deciding to apply may telephone Valerie Noble on (028) 90 277692 or email Valerie.Noble@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 1 300 330 or email: [recruitment@hrconnect.nigov.net](mailto:recruitment@hrconnect.nigov.net)

## ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA

Applicants must, by the closing date for applications:

1. (a) Be registered as a Senior Plant Health Professional in the Register overseen by the Royal Society of Biology<sup>4</sup>;

OR

- (b) Register as a Senior Plant Health Professional in the Register overseen by the Royal Society of Biology \*;

**\*Please note that the successful candidate, if not already registered, will be required to obtain registration in a timescale deemed reasonable by the Department and prior to taking up appointment, and must remain on the register while in the post.**

**AND**

2. Have at least a 2:2 honours degree in plant science or an applied plant science discipline such as agriculture, horticulture, forestry, or an equivalent qualification.

**AND**

3. Have at least 2 years' experience, gained within the last 5 years, in providing advice, making a direct contribution to strategic decision making to formulate policy and delivery at a senior management level\*\* in a regulatory environment;

**AND**

4. Have at least 3 years' experience of successfully leading staff within a medium sized complex organisation\*\*\* and managing working relationships with a diverse range of internal and external stakeholders operating at senior management levels within their organisations.

**The following additional clarification is provided:**

\*\* **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. Within the Northern Ireland Civil Service (NICS), this is at Grade 7 or equivalent.

\*\*\* **“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.

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<sup>4</sup> <https://www.rsb.org.uk/careers-and-cpd/registers/plant-health-register>

- An organisation with multiple stakeholders with competing interests.

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 etc so that a well-informed decision can be made.

Equivalent professional membership: give details of the professional membership held and reasons why you consider it to be equivalent 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/professional membership at assessment/interview so please ensure you have these readily available.

### **SHORTLISTING CRITERION**

In addition applicants should be aware that after an eligibility sift, should it be necessary to shortlist candidates to go forward to interview, the following shortlisting criterion will be used:

- Demonstrate strategic input into the development and/or implementation of current plant health policy issues and of the main related challenges facing the agriculture, horticulture and forest industries.

**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](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. 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 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. 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**

## **5. 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**

## **6. 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**

## **7. Achieving outcomes through Delivery Partners**

Being effective in this area is about maintaining an economic, long-term focus in all activities involving delivery partners (whether from the private, public or voluntary sectors). 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**

**Minimum Standard: 12**

**Total Marks Available: 160**

**Candidates must achieve the minimum standard where applicable and also achieve an overall pass mark of 96.**

## **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 in Belfast during week commencing 30<sup>th</sup> September 2019.

## **NICS COMPETENCY FRAMEWORK**

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

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.

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 a competency at level 3 should be demonstrating levels 1 and 2 as a matter of course.

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

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:**

- Applicants are encouraged to submit online applications wherever possible. However, hard copy application packs are available on request. All applications will be treated equally regardless of whether they are hard copy or online.
- 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, unless it is specifically requested in the application form and candidate information booklet.
- All applications must be received 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. Write 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 acknowledgement 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

## **GUIDANCE FOR APPLICANTS**

### **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. Applicants must be either:

- (i) A UK national; or
- (ii) A Commonwealth citizen; or
- (iii) A British Protected Person; or
- (iv) An EEA national; or
- (v) A Swiss National; or
- (vi) A person who is not an EEA or Swiss national, but is a family member of an EEA national who has moved to the UK from another EEA Member State for an approved purpose.

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.

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).

**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**