



Candidate Information Booklet

IRC257208

Head of Finance - Grade 6

Agri-Food and Biosciences Institute Northern Ireland (AFBI)

Completed Application Forms must be returned to HRConnect no later than 12 noon (UK time) on Thursday 13th August 2020.

Agri-Food and Biosciences Institute Northern Ireland (AFBI)

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
Background	4
Key Responsibilities	13
Terms and Conditions	17
Eligibility Criteria	19
Interview guidance	26
Selection Process	27
General Information	31

Foreword from the Chief Executive

Thank you for your interest in the post of Head of Finance.

The Agri-Food and Biosciences Institute (AFBI) is non-departmental public body sponsored by the Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs (DAERA) and is the Northern Ireland government's main research and science provider in the agri-food and marine sectors. In addition to our work for DAERA, AFBI also undertakes a substantial and increasing programme of externally funded R&D and other scientific work, which is secured from a range of public sector funding organisations, other public sector bodies, industry funders and commercial companies.

AFBI's Corporate Plan outlines our strategy and ambitions for the period 2018 to 2022. It sets out the 3 strategic outcomes AFBI aims to deliver for society, the economy and the environment, as well as industry and customers in an ever more efficient and effective manner. The plan, demonstrates the unique multidisciplinary strength of AFBI and how we will work with partners from science, government, industry and farmers to provide a positive impact. These achievements will be underpinned by attracting and developing excellent staff and building fit for purpose physical infrastructure and systems.

The organisation is now entering a period of significant change including planned investment in new IT systems including the financial systems, a significant re-development of the AFBI estate and further developments strengthening a number of our corporate functions.

The successful candidate will play a critical role in advancing AFBI through this period of change and in the development and implementation of financial strategies, plans and systems to ensure an efficient, robust financial base into the future. The successful candidate will report to the Director of Finance and Corporate Affairs Division, who is a member of the Institute's Executive Management Team (EMT).

This is an excellent opportunity for a senior finance leader who has the ability to deliver change as well as ensuring core support services are delivered in a demanding professional and performance-oriented environment. Excellent interpersonal skills and the ability to develop collaborative and productive working relationships are critical to the role.

The successful candidate will also be required to demonstrate the ability to analyse and proactively manage complex situations and as well as displaying sound judgement in recommending specific courses of action to the Director of Finance and Corporate Affairs, and through them to the EMT and the Board.

Thank you for your interest in this post.

Dr Stanley McDowell
Chief Executive

ABOUT THE AGRI-FOOD AND BIOSCIENCES INSTITUTE

As the Northern Ireland Government's main research and statutory testing provider in the areas of agri-food, fisheries and the environment, AFBI plays a major role in the Northern Ireland knowledge economy.

In line with AFBI's vision of "Advancing the local and global agri-food sectors through scientific excellence" the Institute seeks to be an influential, internationally recognised, centre for research and scientific services in the agri-food and marine sectors. AFBI's science is outcome-driven and aimed at solving important practical problems for a wide range of local, national and international funders in the public and private sectors. Our staff carry out world class scientific research, surveillance, and analytic and diagnostic testing for a wide range of customers in the fields of animal health and welfare, sustainable agricultural systems, plant science, food innovation and safety, environmental protection, fisheries and aquatic ecosystems, and agricultural and rural economics.

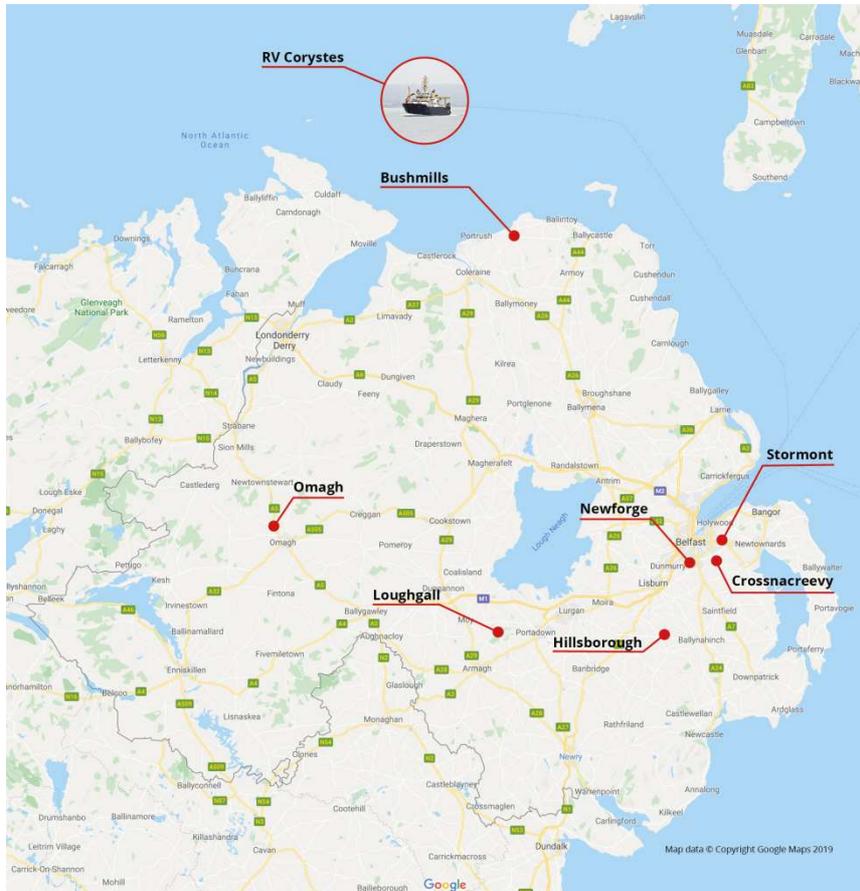
AFBI's 'Science Impacts 2020' publication outlines key outcomes from AFBI science. Notably over the past 5 years AFBI have delivered four million animal, plant and food safety tests to support sales from the NI agri-food industry to the value of £3.2 billion. AFBI have also delivered 91 evidence and innovation projects for DAERA, ~400 peer review scientific publications, over two thousand outreach activities, and have secured £44m of external research grants and contracts working with partners from across 35 countries. In order to fulfil these outcomes for our funders and stakeholders across society, the economy and the environment, AFBI enjoys access to highly instrumented laboratory, field and ship based scientific platforms. Furthermore, we are working closely with our sponsor department to take forward an ambitious programme of capital investment in AFBI's infrastructure including a new animal health sciences building at AFBI Stormont, enhanced research farm facilities at AFBI Hillsborough and a replacement sea-going research vessel.

AFBI is also actively developing strategic alliances with other research organisation and dissemination partners to facilitate a pipeline of research from fundamental to applied and onward application to ensure the impact of AFBI Science.

AFBI's staff complement is approximately 700 people, with an annual turnover of approximately £60 million. Details of AFBI's most recently published income and expenditure are available on its website. AFBI is also located on seven sites across the province, with its Headquarters at Newforge Lane, Belfast.

AFBI are currently organised across 3 divisions – Sustainable Agri-Food Sciences Division (SAFSD), Veterinary Science Division (VSD) and Finance and Corporate Affairs Division (FCAD).

AFBI SITES ACROSS NORTHERN IRELAND

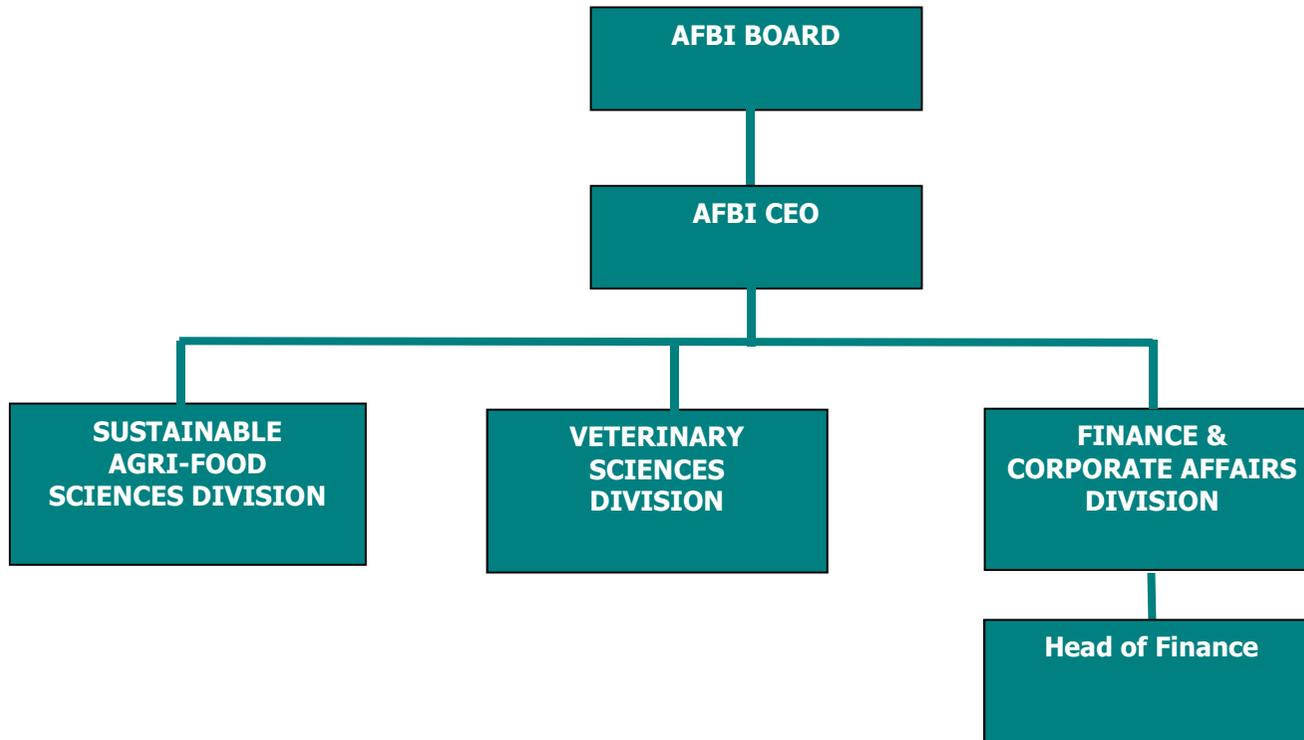


AFBI has 7 sites across Northern Ireland

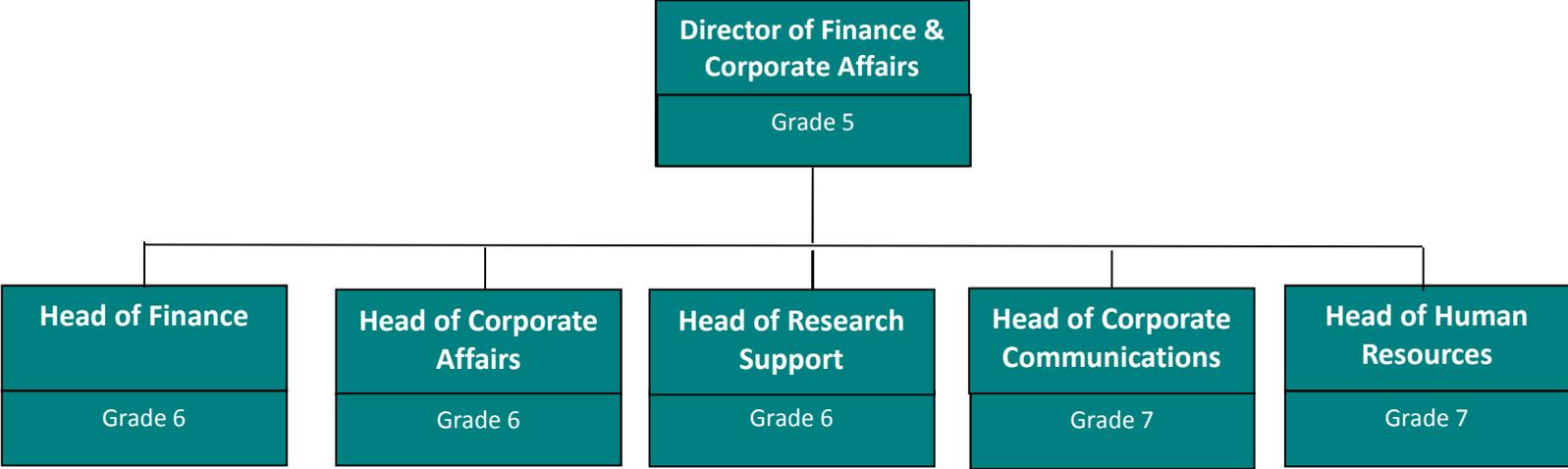
- Newforge Lane (Headquarters)
- VSD Stormont
- Hillsborough
- Crossnacreevy
- Loughgall
- Omagh
- Bushmills

In addition AFBI has a dedicated marine research vessel RV Corystes based in Port of Belfast.

ORGANISATIONAL STRUCTURE



Organisation Structure



FINANCE AND CORPORATE AFFAIRS DIVISION

The Finance and Corporate Affairs Division (FCAD) currently employs approximately circa 110 staff across its Branches. The Division is based primarily at AFBI headquarters, Newforge Lane, Belfast but with staff deployed at some of the larger sites.

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

The Division currently has five senior post holders reporting to the Director of Finance & Corporate Affairs namely Head of Finance, Head of Corporate Affairs, Head of Corporate Communications, Head of Human Resources and Head of Research Support. This senior team has the responsibility for leading and providing the support services across the Institute.

Head of Finance

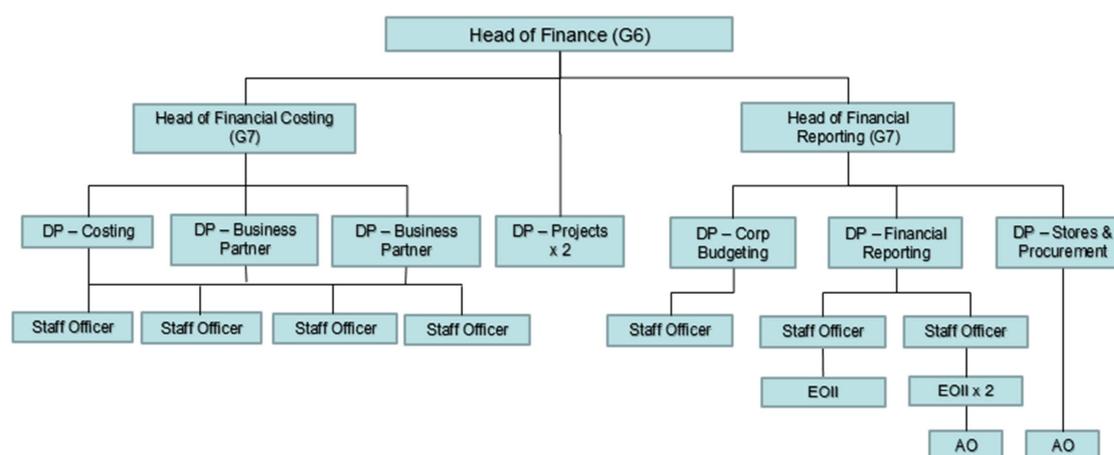
Finance Branch has a complement of 22 staff and manages AFBI's annual budget of approximately £60m. Finance Branch provides support to AFBI's EMT and the wider organisation on financial management and financial governance. This includes financial planning, budgeting and accounting, strategic and business planning, financial systems, procurement and stores.

AFBI is currently operating in an economic environment where budgets are under pressure and the requirement to grow sources of non-DAERA income and improve efficiency increases year on year. Finance Branch therefore provides a critical role in supporting AFBI's development, monitoring and delivery of these challenging targets and in supporting EMT secure AFBI's financial sustainability into the future.

The maintenance of high standards of financial management and corporate governance is of critical importance to AFBI and Finance Branch has been working through a programme of continued improvement over recent years. AFBI has also developed its "Strategic Cost Model" which is a bespoke activity based cost model which enables AFBI to cost all of its individual science projects. AFBI is also developing the current systems and is in the process of going through business case approval for a significant investment in new financial systems as well as seeking to improve its costing model and internal financial reporting.

Finance also has a leading role in supporting the corporate investment projects for new buildings, new systems as well as the procurement of the new Research Vessel. Senior finance staff are members on Project Boards as well as providing financial support and guidance to colleagues who are leading and delivering on these key projects. Finance has been restructured in the last two years to enable delivery on its key strands of work. In addition to a number of permanent recruitments which have been undertaken to strengthen financial governance and financial management, further resources will be considered as projects are undertaken to invest in systems.

The current structure within the Finance Branch is as follows:-



FCAD Division

The other main areas of work undertaken within the Division are outlined below for your information.

Head of Corporate Affairs

This post includes responsibility for the following areas: -

Estates, Emergency Planning and Health & Safety

The Estates Management and Development Branch has responsibility for delivering estate and property management services across the AFBI occupied estate as leased from DAERA, emergency planning capability for the Institute including business continuity management/incident management and the overarching management of Health and Safety.

Included within this remit are the delivery and management of estate maintenance and development, site security, estate related contracts, fire safety, AFBI input to the carbon reduction commitment energy efficiency scheme, estate related overhead budget, health & safety, incident management & business continuity planning.

Governance & Performance

The Governance and Performance Branch provides support and advice on a range of corporate and information governance matters. This includes organisational performance management, risk management, business planning, audit and assurance, insurance & indemnities, data protection, freedom of information,

environmental information regulations and records management. Governance and Performance Branch takes the lead in supporting the Chief Executive as Accounting Officer in ensuring that good governance arrangements are in place coordinating the Institute's contact with the Board, its sub-committees and internal and external auditors. The Branch also incorporates the AFBI Secretariat and Co-ordination Unit which provides administrative and secretarial support to the AFBI Board, its Sub-Committees, Executive Management Team and various ad-hoc groups.

Information Systems Branch

AFBI Information Systems Branch provides comprehensive line-of-business IT infrastructure and application support. This service is offered in conjunction with the support for common IT services provided by IT Assist, Department of Finance (DoF) and Enterprise Shared Services (ESS). The Branch also develops bespoke software solutions for internal and external clients to the benefit of the agri-food industry. Through development of these systems, ISB forms quality partnerships which leads to further collaboration between AFBI and industry bodies. ISB's operations are guided by AFBI's IT Strategic Plan which seeks to ensure that IT continues to work as a strategic enabler for the Institute.

Head of Research Support

The Head of Research Support has responsibility for the Research Support Office.

AFBI has established a Research Support Office (RSO) by bringing together support functions to ensure efficient and effective services are provided as well as assisting in horizon scanning and seeking ways to assist in the maximisation of the impact of the science undertaken. The RSO includes horizon scanning, grant application support, legal services and intellectual property management, claims management and research quality and performance.

It has the responsibility for the development and delivery of support services to the science divisions, to secure and manage non grant-in-aid income, in order to facilitate the achievement of AFBI science strategy. It also has a key role in ensuring appropriate governance of external contracts is in place and to assist in developing strategic alliances with the two local Universities. It must also ensure that there is excellent reporting on research performance to inform management decisions at the EMT and Board levels.

Head of Corporate Communications

Corporate Communications is responsible for communicating the work, values and mission of the Institute internally to staff and externally to stakeholders and to the public locally, nationally and internationally. The corporate communication function includes running a press office (including social media and photography), events management, print and digital publishing to the AFBI intranet and internet, and communications work packages in support of EU and other funded projects.

Head of Human Resources

The Human Resources Branch deliver a range of services to support the Institute in the functions of Learning & Development, Equality, Performance Management, Workforce Planning and Employee Relations. The team are extremely focused on providing support to staff and line managers in ensuring they have what they need to meet wider business plan objectives.

The two science Divisions are as follows:-

SUSTAINABLE AGRI-FOOD SCIENCES DIVISION (SAFSD)

SAFSD is a highly multidisciplinary division with a focus on livestock, plant and in general agriculture production, its impact on the environment and the economy, and the sustainable management of aquatic systems both inland and at sea. This multidisciplinary team of over 320 staff are sited across AFBI Newforge, Hillsborough, Loughgall, Crossnacreevy and Bushmills and conducts science across all aspects of the food supply chain taking research from the soil through to the plant, the animal and the resultant food quality and nutritional value, while also working with colleagues at VSD to ensure animal health and food safety is optimised. A key element of the work also examines quantitative and qualitative socio-economic impacts.

SAFSD utilises a highly instrumented platform across livestock, land management, environmental management as well as marine work to service its main deliverables of research and innovation and monitoring and surveillance. SAFSD also collaborates extensively with other research organisations, industry and government departments locally, nationally and internationally. A key drive within SAFSD is to produce high quality peer review publications while also ensuring the research conducted has impact through an active dissemination programme.

VETERINARY SCIENCES DIVISION (VSD)

VSD currently employs approximately 260 veterinary, scientific, technical and support staff and is predominantly based at Stoney Road, Belfast with a smaller disease surveillance centre based at Omagh, Co. Tyrone.

The Division undertakes an integrated programme of statutory, disease surveillance, emergency response and R&D work on the diseases of major animal and human health significance along with significant programmes of work on the chemical and microbiological safety of food. The work supports government policy and disease eradication and control programmes in areas such as bovine tuberculosis, food-borne zoonotic infections and transboundary diseases. One of the key roles of the Division is in delivering a laboratory response to local, national and international emergencies involving animal diseases, and food and feed contamination incidents.

VSD also provides a disease investigation service covering all of the major farm animal species and fish, and provides commercial laboratory services in support of industry led disease eradication and control programmes. The work of the Division is underpinned by research and development (R&D) on animal diseases and food safety issues relevant to the local industry.

KEY RESPONSIBILITIES

Reporting to the Director of Finance and Corporate Affairs, the post holder will play a pivotal role in providing corporate leadership and in embedding a strong financial performance and governance culture in AFBI.

This is an exciting job for an experienced qualified accountant within a large public sector organisation which is undergoing a period of transformation and seeking to grow its non-DAERA income as well as entering a period of significant change with planned investments in new IT systems.

AFBI is a large multi-disciplinary scientific organisation operating in a very dynamic and competitive environment. Its key partner is DAERA, the sponsor Department, but it is also able to sell its services commercially to other public and private sector customers and bid for a range of other UK, European and International funding streams. This income is particularly important in the face of public expenditure pressures and reducing DAERA income.

This is a senior post, which recognises the importance of finance within AFBI. The person appointed to this challenging and high profile position will be crucial to AFBI's long-term success. The Head of Finance will continue the development of AFBI's finance strategy to support the current strategy and the development of a longer term strategy to 2030.

AFBI has been strengthening and is continuing to develop its financial systems, processes and management information. This includes the development of an activity based costing system to provide robust and timely costing and management information, and unit costs for its high value/high volume scientific test categories. This is a significant stream of work within the finance development plan.

The Head of Finance will play a pivotal role in providing strong leadership and in embedding a strong culture in AFBI. This will include liaising with professional scientific and other staff, across a range of disciplines within the organisation, to ensure that AFBI's financial strategy, policies and systems are efficiently and effectively implemented and to ensure that these are fit for purpose and support the needs of the organisation as well as meeting the high standards of public sector finance. Strong people and project management skills are key to success in this demanding role along with the ability to meet challenging corporate objectives.

The Head of Finance requires excellent interpersonal and written and oral communication skills and must be able to communicate articulately with the Board, senior staff, civil servants and stakeholders and provide well written and well-presented reports. They will be responsible for providing strategic leadership to the Finance Branch and also providing expert financial advice across the Institute. The financial information produced under the responsibility of the Head of Finance will underpin crucial strategic decisions on capital expenditure (CAPEX) for both AFBI and its sponsor department. As a leader the Head of Finance must be able to excel at interpreting and presenting complex financial information to non-finance colleagues and interested stakeholders.

The key responsibilities of this role are:-

- Set strategic direction, lead manage and motivate the finance team to develop a culture of customer service and business partnering, with a strong focus on continuous improvement.
- Maintain and improve financial control over resources, ensuring that funding is available for managed strategic growth without over commitment, including the management of financial risk.
- Recommend budget allocations to the Director of Finance and Corporate Affairs, taking into account income streams, efficiencies and available resources.
- Provide expert financial advice guidance and support to budget holders and branches for preparing economic appraisals required for large investment proposals.
- Develop and implement a finance strategy and rolling long-term financial plan to meet AFBI's overall corporate strategies.
- Drive the development of AFBI's financial systems and processes to ensure they are efficient, fit for purpose and support corporate requirements.
- Develop annual budgeting processes for all science and corporate functions for approval.
- Enhance and refine AFBI's activity based cost model and ensure the required reports are developed and the outputs monitored.
- Preparation and development of AFBI's unit costing Reports, and corporate benchmarking methodology and scope and seek suitable comparators for benchmarking.
- Develop a fit for purpose costing and charging strategy which enables AFBI to compete with its competitors on a level footing and which meets the requirements of Managing Public Money Northern Ireland.
- Develop robust and realistic rolling long-term asset replacement plans and support the development and implementation of a long-term Estate strategy.
- Develop robust financial savings plans and strategies and monitor implementation.
- Strengthen and quality control finance and management reporting to ensure accurate up to date information reflecting income received and due, and expenditure undertaken and committed is reported on a timely basis each

month and at year end.

- Responsible for the continued development of internal financial reporting.
- Ensure effective budget and cash management, including accurate monthly profiling, effective performance management and monitoring of income streams.
- Ensure that the Annual Report & Accounts are presented accurately and in accordance with established timetables and standards.
- Act as the key liaison point with DAERA's AFBI Sponsor Branch and ensure regular, open and effective communication between Finance staff and DAERA Sponsor Branch.
- Support budget and other financial discussions with DAERA.
- Take the lead on AFBI corporate projects as required.
- Ensure NIAO and Internal Audit report recommendations are implemented on a timely basis that lessons learned are communicated effectively throughout the organisation.

Organisational Development & Culture

- Support the Director to lead and set strategic definition in the transformation of services and support functions to take forward change management programmes.
- Develop practical communications and engagement plans to help those affected understand the value of the changes and the positive impact they will have on them and their place of work.

This role also includes the following general senior management responsibilities.

Branch Finance & Corporate Governance

- Maintain a sound system of internal control including ensuring compliance with corporate policies and governance requirements.
- Prepare the Branch business plan and manage the delivery of divisional objectives.
- Contribute to the identification of key strategic priorities that will impact on the organisation within the corporate and risk management frameworks.
- Ensure compliance and best practice in relation to: audit and risk; holding and processing information; data protection, GDPR, the use of corporate electronic systems; freedom of information and environmental regulations.
- Promote high standards of accountability, integrity and probity and provide professional advice to support decision making.
- Monitor resource and capital allocations and ensure that the branch remains within allocations.

Branch Leadership & People Management

- Foster an environment and culture that delivers excellence in all activities.
- Support the Director and play a key role in establishing a research and enterprise culture across the Institute and ensure the delivery of the external income generation targets.
- Provide strong leadership and vision to staff and effectively manage change programmes.
- Encourage cross-branch and cross-divisional team working to maximise AFBI's diverse range of expertise and capabilities.
- Provide effective performance management of direct reports to include: setting and monitoring objectives; identifying training and performance management issues.
- Review and ensure effective staffing structures are in place with the appropriate levels of skills and expertise.
- Ensure safe, secure and suitable working environments which are health and safety compliant.
- Ensure compliance with statutory Section 75 Equality duties.
- Deputise for the Director as and when required.

This list is not exclusive and the successful candidate may be required to carry out other duties as required.

TERMS AND CONDITIONS

There is currently one full-time permanent position to be filled. A reserve list will exist and will be held for a period of 12 months from the date of interview, to cover any further vacancies which may arise.

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.

Salary

The salary will be within the band range of £57,525 - £64,779 (pending pay review) which pay increases will be on an incremental basis provided staff performance reports are satisfactory.

Starting salary will normally be at the minimum of the scale except for existing AFBI staff for whom starting salary may be determined by either promotion or re-grading terms if these are more favourable.

Consideration may be given to starting at a higher point on the salary scale for applicants with additional relevant experience and/or qualifications. The relevance and extent of the additional experience will be determined by AFBI at the time of offer of appointment.

Pension

AFBI offers all employees an attractive pension package. Further details of this can be found at the following link: www.finance-ni.gov.uk/civilservicepensions-ni.

Annual Leave

In addition to the usual public and privilege holidays, there is an annual leave allowance of 25 days, increasing to 30 after five years' satisfactory service.

Working Hours

The successful candidates will normally be required to work 37 hours each week, however the hours / duties will include evening/night, weekend and bank holiday working. AFBI operates a flexi working system.

Location

The successful candidate will normally be based at AFBI Headquarters, Newforge Lane, Belfast, BT9 5PX.

Travel

The post will entail travel locally, and occasionally nationally and internationally and for this reason the successful applicant will require access to a form of transport which will permit them to meet the requirements of the post in full.

Training

Appropriate training will be provided, where required, to enable the successful candidate to carry out the full range of assigned duties.

Probation

The post holder will serve 12 months probation in the new post. This will commence from the date of appointment. At the end of the probation period a formal review will be conducted to determine if the posting will be made permanent.

Further Information

Further Information about the post may be obtained from Fiona Campbell by email at: Fiona.Campbell@afbini.gov.uk.

If you have any questions about the competition process, you should contact HRConnect on 0800 1 300 330 or email recruitment@hrconnect.nigov.net.

ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA

By the closing date for applications candidates must, have:

1. Have successfully completed the professional examinations and be a full, current member of at least one of the following bodies:
 - Chartered Accountants Ireland;
 - The Institute of Chartered Accountants in Scotland;
 - The Institute of Chartered Accountants in England and Wales;
 - The Chartered Institute of Management Accountants;
 - The Association of Chartered Certified Accountants;
 - The Chartered Institute of Public Finance Accountancy;
 - The Institute of Certified Public Accountants in Ireland.

Applications will also be considered from applicants with recognised professional membership considered by the selection panel to be of an equivalent or higher standard to those stated.

When stating relevant or equivalent professional membership: give the type of professional membership and date on which you were admitted to full membership by the official awarding body. If you believe your professional membership is equivalent to that required, the onus is on you to provide the panel with sufficient details, using examples and dates of modules studied etc so that a well-informed decision can be made.

AND

2. Have at least 3 years' post-qualification* practical experience in each of the following areas. Full details, including specific dates, must be provided on your application form:
 - a) Proactive and effective financial leadership and management in a large and complex** public, private or voluntary sector organisation, including development of financial strategy;
 - b) Meeting challenging financial or other performance objectives and targets;
 - c) Development and use of:
 - i. management accounting systems; or
 - ii. financial accounting systems; and / or
 - iii. costing reporting systems; and
 - d) Evidence of having effectively analysed, managed and presented complex financial management information at senior management, board or ministerial level to inform decisions.

AND

3. At least 3 years' senior management*** experience of successfully leading, managing and delivering business change in a complex** environment;

AND

4. Evidence of 3 years' direct and personal experience of people management, providing effective and engaged leadership, adaptability and responsiveness to change;

AND

5. Demonstrate a successful track record of effectively influencing and managing internal and external stakeholders to achieve corporate objectives.

The following definitions are provided:

* **Post qualification** practical experience will be deemed to have commenced from the date on which applicants are admitted to full membership of one of the professional bodies at (1), having fully satisfied all the criteria of membership.

** **Complex** is defined as working with a range of strong interest groups inside and/or outside the organisation.

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

SHORTLISTING CRITERIA

In the event that shortlisting is required the selection panel will reach a decision as to whether or not an applicant meets each criterion on a scored basis for eligibility criteria 2 – 5 with a minimum score set for each criterion. Only those applicants assessed as meeting all essential criteria will be eligible to proceed to the next stage of the selection process.

However, in the case of a high volume of applicants AFBI may decide to limit the number of applicants it invites for interview in a proportionate manner. In this instance all applicants who meet the essential requirements will be listed in merit order according to their total score and the highest scoring applicants will proceed to interview.

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 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.
- **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.
- Further information on the Core Competences for this grade can be accessed through www.nicsrecruitment.org.uk

PERSON SPECIFICATION

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

This position is analogous to Grade 6 in the NICS.

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. 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 through www.nicsrecruitment.org.uk

It is important that all candidates familiarise themselves with the competency framework as this forms the basis of the assessment / interview criteria as outlined below.

INTERVIEW CRITERIA

The selection process will include a presentation and a competence based interview. Applicants will be expected to demonstrate the following selection criteria/competences at interview:

Presentation

Candidates will be required to deliver a presentation, lasting no more than 7 minutes, the subject of which will be provided to candidates in the invitation to interview letter.

Candidates should fully prepare their presentation in advance of the interview and no preparation time will be provided on the day of interview. Your presentation should be delivered via PowerPoint and you will be asked to submit it to HRConnect by a specific date prior to your interview. Full details will be provided should you be invited to interview.

Following the presentation, the panel may elect to ask questions on the presentation.

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

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 AFBI and Programme for Government goals and deliver the greatest value.

Marks Available: 20

1. Professional, Knowledge and Skills

Marks Available: 40 Minimum Standard: 24

2. 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.

Marks Available: 20

3. 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.

Marks Available: 20

4. Leading & 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.

Marks Available: 20 Minimum Standard: 12

5. Collaborating & Partnering

People skilled in this area create and maintain positive, professional and trusting working relationships with a wide range of people within and outside the organisation, to help to achieve business objectives and goals. At all levels, it requires working collaboratively, sharing information and building supportive, responsive relationships with colleagues and stakeholders, whilst having the confidence to challenge assumptions.

Marks Available: 20

6. Managing a Quality Service

Effectiveness in this area is about being organised to deliver service objectives and striving to improve the quality of service, taking account of diverse customer needs and requirements. People who are effective plan, organise and manage their time and activities to deliver a high quality and efficient service, applying programme and project management approaches appropriately and effectively to support service delivery.

Marks Available: 20 Minimum Standard: 12

Total marks available: 160

Overall pass mark: 96 (60%)

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.

INTERVIEWS

It is intended that interviews for this post will take place via video conferencing or physically at AFBI HQ, Newforge Lane, Belfast during September 2020.

INTERVIEW GUIDANCE FOR APPLICANTS

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 in relation to each of the competences. 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.

SELECTION PROCESS

The Merit Principle

Appointments to AFBI are made under the 'merit principle', where the best person for any given post is selected in fair and open competition.

Making your application

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.

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.
- Applicants must complete the application form in 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;
- Do not use acronyms, complex technical detail etc. Write for the reader who may not know your employer, your Branch or your job.
- 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.
- The examples you provide should be concise and relevant to the criteria. This is very important as the examples which you provide may be checked out 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.

Application Form Submission

- Please refer to the Candidate Information Booklet before completing an application.
- **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.
- All applications must be received by the advertised closing date. Late applications or applications received by fax or by email will not be accepted. Applicants using Royal Mail should note that 1st class mail does not guarantee next day delivery. It is also the responsibility of the applicant to ensure that sufficient postage has been paid to return the form to HRConnect. HRConnect will not accept any application where they are asked to pay any shortfall in postage.

- Only the employment history, eligibility and shortlisting 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 page within this time you will automatically be logged out and any unsaved work will be lost.
- Please do not attempt to reformat application forms as this will result in disqualification.

Changes in personal circumstances

Please ensure HRConnect are informed immediately of any changes in personal circumstances.

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.

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.

Further appointments from this competition

Where a further position in AFBI is identified which is considered broadly similar to that outlined in this candidate information booklet, consideration will be given to filling the position from this competition. The merit list resulting from this competition will be valid for a period of up to one year.

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.

Equal Opportunity Monitoring Form

Please note, this form is regarded as part of your application and failure to complete and return it will result in disqualification.

For guidance on completing the Monitoring Form and to read the NICS Equal Opportunities Policy Statement to which AFBI adheres please refer to page 33.

All applications for employment are considered strictly on the basis of merit. Applications are particularly welcomed from Roman Catholics and Females as these groups are currently under-represented within AFBI.

AFBI IS AN EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES EMPLOYER

Assessment Information

It is HRConnect policy that all candidates invited to attend for assessment brings sufficient documentation to satisfy the eligibility/shortlisting criteria and the Nationality and Vetting requirements. Further details regarding acceptable documentation will be issued with an invitation to attend for assessment.

You should ensure that these documents are readily available.

Employment Requirements

HRConnect must ensure that you are legally entitled to work in the United Kingdom.

Entry to the United Kingdom is controlled under the Immigration Act 1971. Everyone who does not have the right of abode is subject to immigration control. You should check whether there are any restrictions on your stay or your freedom to take or change employment before you apply for a post. If you are invited to interview we will ask you to provide documentation confirming that you are entitled to work in the UK, under the terms of the Asylum and Immigration Act 1996.

Advice on entitlement to work may be obtained from the Home Office website, www.ind.homeoffice.gov.uk.

Nationality Requirements

There are no nationality requirements for AFBI posts.

Vetting Procedures

1. Baseline Personnel Security Standard

For this post 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) Other acceptable documents are listed on www.ind.homeoffice.gov.uk.
- d) A specimen signature at any assessment event and have this validated against passport, driving licence, application form etc.

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.

PLEASE NOTE: It is a criminal offence for anyone who is included on a barred list to work or seek work, in regulated activity.

For more information, the address of the AccessNI website is: <http://www.accessni.gov.uk/>. 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. This can be downloaded from the AccessNI website. Guidance notes of the completion of the form are also included on the website. 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 above 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.

Order of Merit

The selection panel will assess candidates against the interview criteria. Those candidates who meet the required standard(s) and pass mark will be deemed suitable for appointment. The selection panel will then list those suitable for appointment in order of merit with the highest scoring applicant ranked first. HRConnect will allocate a candidate (or candidates) to a vacancy (or vacancies) in the order listed. The order of merit is valid for one year.

GENERAL INFORMATION

Pensions

New entrants who join the Agri-Food and Biosciences Institute (AFBI) are eligible to join the NICS pension scheme.

Further details can be found on the Principal Civil Service Pensions Scheme (Northern Ireland) website at:

<http://www.dfpni.gov.uk/civilservicepensions-ni/index/new-members.htm>

or

if you are unable to access the website please contact Civil Service Pensions as follows:

Civil Service Pensions
Waterside House
75 Duke Street
Londonderry
BT47 6FP
Tel: 02871 319000
Email: cspensions.cpg@dfpni.gov.uk

Feedback

AFBI is committed to ensuring that the processes used to recruit and select staff are fair. 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

Please apply online or post your hardcopy completed application form to the HRConnect Recruitment Team:

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

NOTE: Late applications or applications received by fax or email will not be accepted.

Contact details:

If you have any queries regarding the competition process please contact HRConnect at the address above or by;

Email: Recruitment@HRConnect.nigov.net

Tel: 0800 1 300 330

Fax: 028 9024 1665

Equality, Diversity and Inclusion

Policy Statement

The Northern Ireland Civil Service Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Policy statement to which AFBI adheres is set out below.

“The Northern Ireland Civil Service (NICS) has a strong and clear commitment to equality, diversity and inclusion. It is our policy that all eligible persons shall have equal opportunity for employment and advancement in the NICS on the basis of their ability, qualifications and aptitude for the work. Everyone has a right to equality of opportunity and to a good and harmonious working environment and atmosphere where they are treated with dignity and respect. We aim to provide opportunities for all sections of the community and continue to strive to create an inclusive working environment in which difference is recognised and valued. Bringing together people from diverse backgrounds and giving each person the opportunity to contribute their skills and experience will help us to respond more effectively to the needs of the people we serve”.

We all want to work in an harmonious workplace where we feel valued, respected and included, irrespective of gender, including gender reassignment, marital or civil partnership status, race/ethnic origin, religious belief or political opinion, disability, having or not having dependants, sexual orientation and age.

In order to provide a high quality service to the people of Northern Ireland the NICS needs to attract, recruit, develop and retain the very best people at all levels. Our approach is based on three key principles:-

Equality – we promote equality of opportunity by seeking to remove barriers, eliminating discrimination and ensuring equal opportunity and access for all groups of people.

Diversity – we accept each person as an individual. Our success is built on our ability to embrace diversity – and we believe that everyone should feel valued for their contributions. By working together we will deliver the best possible service for our staff, customers and stakeholders.

Inclusion – we create a working culture where differences are not merely accepted, but valued; where everyone has the opportunity to develop in a way that is consistent with, and adheres to NICS values of impartiality, honesty, integrity and objectivity. Our aim is to be an organisation where people feel involved, respected and connected to our success.

It is the responsibility of all staff to be aware of and to apply this policy. Both Management and Trade Union Side are fully committed to the policy and will endeavour to ensure its full implementation.

Equal Opportunities Monitoring

Equality monitoring is the process of collecting, storing and analysing information that is relevant to and necessary for the purpose of promoting equality of opportunity between different categories of persons. This section sets out what information is collected, the reasons for doing so and what it is used for.

You should note that the Monitoring Form is regarded as part of your application and failure to fully complete and return it will result in disqualification. The Monitoring Form will be processed separately and neither the form nor the details contained in it will be available to those considering your application.

Monitoring equality and diversity in the workforce enables the NICS to examine how our employment policies and processes are working and to identify areas where these appear to be impacting disproportionately on certain groups of staff.

Legislative Context

This section explains the reasons for gathering this information by setting out the legislative background.

Gender

The Sex Discrimination (NI) Order 1976 (as amended) makes it unlawful to discriminate against an individual on the grounds of his or her sex. Information on gender is also provided in the annual statutory monitoring return, as required by the Fair Employment and Treatment (NI) Order 1998. Section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998 requires public authorities in carrying out their functions in NI to have due regard to the need to promote equality of opportunity between men and women generally.

Age

The Employment Equality (Age) Regulations (NI) 2006 make it unlawful for employers and others to discriminate on grounds of age. Section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998 requires public authorities in carrying out their functions in NI to have due regard to the need to promote equality of opportunity between persons of different ages and age groups.

Community Background

The Fair Employment and Treatment (NI) Order 1998 outlaws discrimination on the basis of religious belief or political opinion. The Order also requires the NICS to submit an annual monitoring return to the Equality Commission for Northern Ireland. This takes the form of a statistical return, providing information on the gender and community background composition of all people working in the NICS at the 1st January each year.

Section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998 requires public authorities in carrying out their functions in NI to have due regard to the need to promote equality of opportunity between persons of different religious belief and political opinion. Following guidance issued in July 2007 by the Equality Commission for NI the NICS has decided to use “community background” information as a proxy for political opinion.

Disability

The Disability Discrimination Act 1995 (the DDA) provides protection for disabled persons against discrimination on the grounds of disability.

The DDA 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. Examples would be blindness, deafness, paralysis of a leg or heart disease.

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

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 person with a life expectancy of less than 12 months is of course covered if the effect is likely to last for the whole of that time.

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.

What sort of effect must there be?

The person must be affected in at least one of the respects listed in the DDA: mobility; manual dexterity; physical co-ordination; continence; ability to lift, carry or otherwise move everyday objects; speech; hearing or eyesight; memory or ability to concentrate, learn or understand; ability to take part in normal social interaction and form social relationships; or perception of risk of physical danger.

What happens if the effects are reduced by medication or other treatment?

Broadly speaking, the effects that matter are those that would be present if there was no medication or treatment taking place. The exception is people who wear spectacles or contact lenses when what matters is the effect that remain while the spectacles or contact lenses are being used.

Are there any types of condition covered by special provisions in the DDA?

Yes, because some people with particular conditions might not otherwise be counted as disabled. These are provisions covering:

Recurring or fluctuating conditions such as arthritis, where the effects can sometimes be less than substantial, which are treated as continuing to have a substantial adverse effect so long as that effect is likely to recur;

Conditions which progressively deteriorate, such as motor neuron disease, which count as having a substantial effect from the first time they have any effect at all on ability to carry out normal day to day activities even if it is not substantial, so long as there is eventually likely to be a substantial adverse effect; and

People with cancer, HIV, or multiple sclerosis are deemed to be disabled people from the point of diagnosis, regardless of whether or not they have any symptoms.

Are any conditions not covered?

Yes, the following conditions specifically do not count as impairments:

Addiction to or dependency on alcohol, nicotine or any other substance (unless resulting from the substance being medically prescribed);

Seasonal allergic rhinitis (e.g. hay fever) unless it aggravates the effect of another condition;

Tendency to set fires, or steal, or physically or sexually abuse other persons;

Exhibitionism and voyeurism;

Severe disfigurements consisting of tattoos, non-medical body piercing or attachments to such piercing are not treated as having substantial adverse effects.

What if someone has recovered from a disability?

Much of the DDA also applies to people who have had a disability in the past (for example, someone who was disabled by mental ill health) but have now fully recovered. People who were registered disabled under the Disabled Persons (Employment) Act (NI) 1945 both on 12 January 1995 and 2 December 1996 will be regarded as having had a disability in the past if they do not in any case fall within the definition of the DDA.

Section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998 requires public authorities in carrying out their functions in NI to have due regard to the need to promote equality of opportunity between persons with a disability and persons without.

Race

The Race Relations (NI) Order 1997 makes it unlawful to discriminate on grounds of colour, race, nationality or ethnic or national origin. Section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998 requires public authorities in carrying out their functions in NI to have due regard to the need to promote equality of opportunity between persons of different racial group(s).

Sexual Orientation

The Employment Equality (Sexual Orientation) Regulations (NI) Order 2003 makes it unlawful for employers and others to discriminate on the grounds of sexual orientation. In order to monitor the effectiveness of NICS policies information is gathered on sexual orientation. Section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998 requires public authorities in carrying out their functions in NI to have due regard to the need to promote equality of opportunity between persons of different sexual orientation.

Marital Status

The Sex Discrimination (NI) Order 1976 (as amended), makes it unlawful to discriminate against married persons and civil partners in employment. Section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998 requires public authorities in carrying out their functions in NI to have due regard to the need to promote equality of opportunity between persons of different marital status.

Dependants Status

Section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998 requires public authorities, in carrying out their functions in NI, to have due regard to the need to promote equality of opportunity between persons with dependants and persons without.

Confidentiality of Monitoring Information

The following general principles will be applied to all individual monitoring information:-

- individual monitoring information will be afforded a high degree of confidentiality;
- misuse of monitoring information will be viewed as a disciplinary offence; and
- individual monitoring information will only be disclosed to members of staff or officials of a trade union, members of which are employed in the NICS, if it is necessary to do so for the appropriate discharge of their duties and responsibilities.

In addition to the above internal safeguards on the protection of equality monitoring information generally, the confidentiality of community background monitoring information is protected through Regulations made under the Fair Employment and Treatment (Northern Ireland) Order 1998 (FETO). These make it a criminal offence, subject to specific exceptions, for an employer or employee to disclose information on the community background of an individual which has been obtained, or is used, for the purpose of monitoring under FETO.

As with other forms of personal data, the obtaining, use, storage and disclosure of monitoring information is covered by the Data Protection Act 1998 (DPA). Monitoring information is held on computer and is protected by a high level of security. Access to this data is restricted to those NICS staff, employees of HRConnect and Trade Union officials whose duties make it necessary for them to have it. Misuse of monitoring information is viewed as a disciplinary offence.