



## **Candidate Information Booklet**

**IRC269929**

**Scientific Officer (SO) - Soil Quality Scientist – 48 month Fixed Term Contract**

Agri-Food and Biosciences Institute Northern Ireland (AFBI)

Completed Application Forms must be returned to HRConnect no later than 12 noon (UK time) on Monday 6<sup>th</sup> December 2021

### **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.

<b>Contents</b>	<b>Page</b>
<b>Background</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>Job Description</b>	<b>6</b>
<b>Person Specification</b>	<b>13</b>
<b>Selection Process</b>	<b>17</b>
<b>General Information</b>	<b>21</b>

## **BACKGROUND**

### **ABOUT THE AGRI-FOOD AND BIOSCIENCES INSTITUTE**

AFBI is a non-departmental public body sponsored by DAERA and a leading provider of scientific research and services to government, non-governmental organisations and commercial companies.

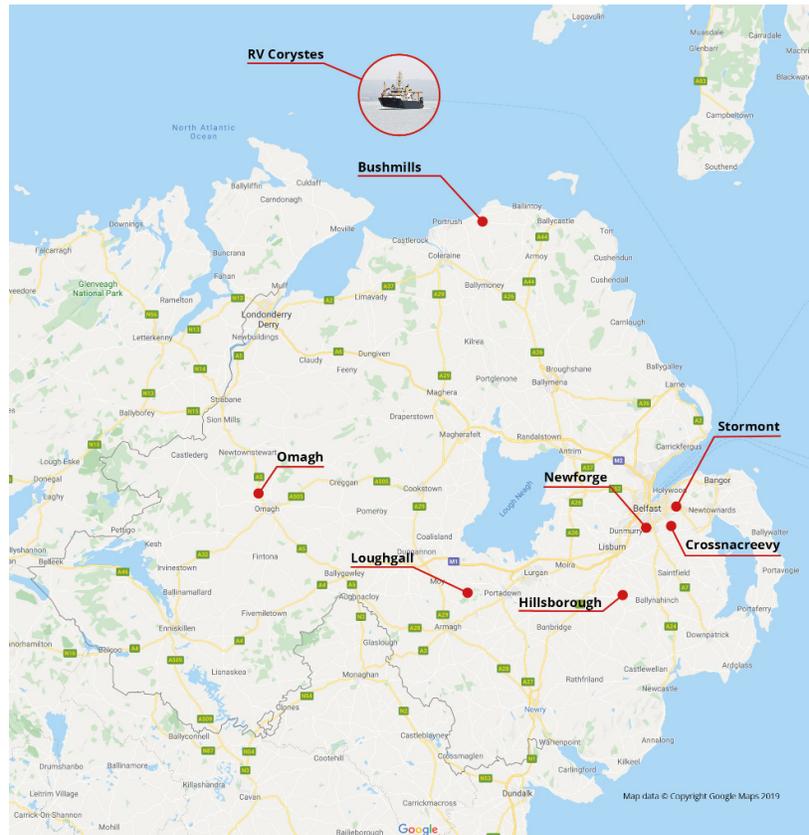
In line with AFBI's vision of "Advancing the local and global agri-food sectors through scientific excellence." the Institute seeks to be an influential, internationally recognised, centre for research and scientific services in the agri-food and marine sectors, providing high quality and locally relevant science. Our current Corporate Plan for 2018-22 sets out our aims to deliver for society, the economy and the environment, and to meet the needs of customers and partners in an ever more efficient and effective manner. To achieve these aims, our Corporate Plan also outlines how we, with the support of our sponsoring department, plan to invest in our people and infrastructure to provide innovative, efficient and effective service delivery. These plans include an ambitious programme of capital investment in AFBI's infrastructure including a new animal health sciences building at AFBI Stormont, improved research farm facilities at AFBI Hillsborough and a replacement sea-going research vessel.

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. AFBI's scale, relationships with a wide range of international research organisations and close links with local universities and industry mean that it is ideally placed to carry out research that has both global and local impact. 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 main work areas are aimed at leading improvements in the agri-food industry; protecting animal, plant and human health; and enhancing the natural and marine environments. We have a staff complement of approximately 650 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 located on seven sites across the province, with its headquarters at Newforge Lane, Belfast.

## AFBI SITES ACROSS NORTHERN IRELAND



AFBI has 7 sites across Northern Ireland

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

In addition a 53 m dedicated marine research vessel RV Corystes based in Port of Belfast.

AFBI's science activities are organised across 3 divisions – Environment and Marine Sciences Division (EMSD), Sustainable Agri-Food Sciences Division (SAFSD) and Veterinary Science Division (VSD) with Finance and Corporate Affairs Division (FCAD) delivering on Business needs.

## **ENVIRONMENT AND MARINE SCIENCES DIVISION (EMSD)**

EMSD is a new science division, which has been established following a review of AFBI's organizational structure. It comprises of two areas, which have in recent years been part of the Sustainable Agri-Food Sciences Division. The areas of work which will fall within EMSD currently have approximately 120 scientific, technical and support staff.

The decision to establish this new division reflects the increasing importance and amount of scientific work undertaken by AFBI in the agri-environment, marine and aquatic ecosystems areas. The division will focus on evidence based science, which is key to addressing the significant environmental challenges whilst ensuring the sustainable use of natural resources and the future prosperity of the agri-food sector. The division is in a unique position to delivery on a high impact and quality integrated programme of research spanning from the soil to the sea.

Key actors within EMSD represent:

**Agri-Environment Branch** - which interfaces between intensive livestock production, and environmental management and regulation which includes the impacts of agricultural land use practices on soil, water and air and identify ways of optimizing land-based livestock production.

**Fisheries and Aquatic Ecosystems Branch** who conduct research and development, monitoring and technology transfer in the area of marine fisheries stock assessment, coastal zone science, biological oceanography, marine ecosystem health, and freshwater fisheries stock assessment.

## **SUSTAINABLE AGRI-FOOD SCIENCES DIVISION (SAFSD)**

SAFSD currently employs approximately 200 scientific, technical and support staff across its five scientific based branches.

As such SAFSD is a highly multi-disciplinary division with a key focus on livestock, plant and in general agriculture production and their interactions with the environment. This multi-disciplinary team can explore all aspects of the food supply chain taking research from the soil through to the plant to 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 and modelling market impacts as a result of policy decisions.

SAFSD utilises a highly instrumented platform across livestock and land management 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.

Key actors within SAFSD represent:

The **Economics Research Branch** undertake quantitative and qualitative socio-economic research to inform agri-food and rural policy development and industry decision making, regionally and nationally.

**Livestock Production Sciences Branch** which links fundamental livestock science to systems level research to deliver innovations for the agri-food sector and advance scientific knowledge.

**Food Research Branch** who deliver research in the areas of optimising eating quality and nutritional quality in meat, dairy and other food products, together with evaluating novel processes for extending shelf-life and increasing safety.

**Grassland and Plant Science Branch** who underpin DAERA's policy development on plant health and deliver scientific advances in areas such as grass breeding, testing and agronomy, Plant Health and land management.

**Statistical Services Branch** which provide a Statistical Analyses and Consultation Services in support of Scientific Research Projects and Statutory work carried out by AFBI.

### **VETERINARY SCIENCES DIVISION (VSD)**

VSD currently employs approximately 260 veterinary, scientific, technical and support staff across its four Branches (Bacteriology, Chemical and Immunodiagnostic Sciences, Disease Surveillance and Investigation, and Virology). The Division 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.

VSD includes the following branches

**Bacteriology Branch** undertakes statutory, analytical and research work on the major bacterial pathogens of animal and public health significance. Much of this work underpins important DAERA animal disease control programmes in areas such as bovine tuberculosis and food-borne zoonoses.

The work of **Chemical and Immunodiagnostic Sciences Branch** includes chemical analysis for a wide range of veterinary drug residues, marine biotoxins, pesticides, mycotoxins and heavy metals as well as immunodiagnostic testing in support of a number of disease control programmes including brucellosis, transboundary diseases, import/export testing and TSE.

**Disease Surveillance and Investigation Branch** undertakes a programme of scanning (passive) disease surveillance on behalf of DAERA and provides commercial laboratory services in support of industry led disease eradication and control programmes.

The work of the **Virology Branch** is aimed at improving the diagnosis and control of viral diseases of farmed animals (pigs, poultry, cattle, sheep and aquaculture). The Branch also has responsibility for the molecular confirmation of major infectious / epizootic diseases in animals.

## **FINANCE AND CORPORATE AFFAIRS DIVISION**

Finance and Corporate Affairs Division currently employs approximately circa 80 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 senior management 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 main areas of work of the Branches are outlined below.

### **Corporate Communications**

Corporate Communications is responsible for all of AFBI's internal and external communications. It support scientists to ensure their message is impactful by running a press office (including social media and photography), events management, and print and digital publishing to the AFBI intranet and internet.

### **Estate Management and Emergency Planning**

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

### **Health & Safety**

The AFBI Health and Safety Branch has an advisory function to the organisation, providing guidance and assistance to those with responsibility for implementing the health and safety policy within AFBI, and also to assist with health and safety queries from individuals.

### **Finance & Procurement**

AFBI Finance & Procurement Branch is responsible for the administration of all finance related functions in support of AFBI's 3 Divisions and Executive Management Team. This includes financial planning, budgeting and accounting and business planning and financial systems. The Branch provides a stores service on the Newforge and Stormont sites and also provides procurement advice to all AFBI staff.

### **Governance & Performance**

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

### **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.

### **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.

### **Research Support Office**

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

The Research Support Office will drive engagement with a broad range of partners from Government to industrial and commercial clients, resulting in

increased external income generation. It is responsible for: identifying and developing potential research and enterprise incomes sources, promoting these opportunities to relevant colleagues, supporting staff in preparing grant and commercial applications, managing the application/tendering/contracting process and providing post-award support (including on such issues as reporting and auditing). The team will also provide a critical role in support the Institutes submission to the Research Excellence Framework and other similar initiatives.

## **AGRI-ENVIRONMENT BRANCH BACKGROUND**

The Agri-Environment Branch is one of seven Branches within the Sustainable Agri-Food Sciences Division in AFBI, meeting the global challenges of food security and sustainable intensification. The aims of the Branch are to develop and sustain an integrated research effort with national and international recognition on nutrient management within agricultural systems, focusing particularly on the needs of Northern Ireland, thereby

- developing sustainable practices within a competitive industry
- providing a scientific basis for government policy and
- enhancing the quality of the environment.

Environmental research in the Branch addresses land and nutrient management issues to make appropriate and efficient use of resources, while protecting the environment. The integrated research effort covers the impact of agriculture on air, soil and water quality. The outputs of this research have provided much of the scientific basis for the development of the Action Plan for Northern Ireland to comply with the Nitrates Directive and Derogation, Phosphorus Regulations and Water Framework Directive. The Branch undertakes basic, strategic and applied research for DAERA and other government departments and agencies, as well as commercial organisations.

Research programmes are in place within the Branch to address the issues of nitrogen efficiency, phosphorus losses, water quality, soil quality, nutrient management planning, climate change and greenhouse gas emissions and aquatic ecology.

## **JOB DESCRIPTION**

There is currently one fixed term contract (48 months) full time post to be filled at Scientific Officer Grade within the Agri-Environment Branch. A merit list will exist and will be held for a period of 12 months from the date of interview, to cover any similar vacancies which may arise.

The post will be based within the Agri-Environment Branch AFBI Headquarters, Newforge Lane, Belfast and the post-holder will be part of a team of scientists responsible for taking forward a programme of research on Soil Biogeochemistry and Terrestrial Ecology, which strongly depends on the effective delivery of both laboratory and field research.

The post holder will be managerially accountable to the High Scientific Officer within the project area. The post will involve the effective delivery of laboratory work at AFBI Headquarters in Newforge Lane, Belfast and field work at different experimental sites across Northern Ireland.

The post holder will carry out a range of laboratory activities including soil (and plant material) processing and chemical analyses, soil physical fractionation, and the preparation of soil samples for a variety of biological analyses.

The post holder will carry out field work including soil and plant sampling and the operation and maintenance of a LICOR Automated Soil CO<sub>2</sub> Flux System, and other equipment in the field and in the laboratory.

The post holder will contribute to collate raw data, and prepare datasets for statistical analysis.

The post-holder will be expected to line manage and supervise staff involved in laboratory and field operations.

### **Salary**

The salary for the post will be within the range £28,706 - £29,307 (under review) within 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.

### **Annual Leave**

In addition to the usual public and privilege holidays, there is an annual leave allowance of 25 days.

## **Working Hours**

The successful candidate will normally be required to work 5 days each week, totalling 37 hours. On occasions the duties may include some evening and weekend working. AFBI operates a flexi working system.

## **Location**

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

## **Travel**

The post may entail some travel within Northern Ireland, Republic of Ireland, 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.

## **Medical**

The successful candidate will be asked to complete a health declaration questionnaire and as this study comprises physical field-based activities over the duration of the experiment, the successful applicants will be required to undergo and pass a medical assessment prior to appointment.

## **Probationary Period**

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 extended.

## **Further Information**

Applicants wishing to learn more about the post before deciding to apply may email AFBI HR at [workforceplanning@afbini.gov.uk](mailto:workforceplanning@afbini.gov.uk).

If you have any queries about the competition process you should contact HRConnect on 0800 1 300 330, or email [recruitment@hrconnect.nigov.net](mailto:recruitment@hrconnect.nigov.net)

## **KEY RESPONSIBILITIES**

Working within the Soil Biogeochemistry and Terrestrial Ecology research programme within AFBI's Agri-Environment Branch (AEB), the post holder will report to a Higher Scientific Officer and the main duties of the post will be as follows:

### **1. Delivery of research projects**

To deliver research to meet the objectives of the Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs (DAERA) and externally funded projects associated with the investigation of soil ecosystems, and the characterization of soil chemical, physical and biological properties to provide data that support all major projects deliverables.

This research area is set to expand with the demand for agriculture to deliver on public environmental goods. The work area is largely driven by the policy requirements of DAERA and contributes to a better understanding of the impact that human activities can have on soil health with the aim to improve the long-term sustainability of agricultural soils.

In collaboration with other research scientists, the post-holder will carry out field and laboratory work aimed to collect soil and plant data to support multiple lines of investigation. A high level of technical competence and organisational skill is essential, and the capability to solve logistical problems as they arise and use time effectively to deliver field and laboratory work.

The post-holder will have a good track record of working in a soil and plant laboratory setting dealing with a variety of tasks associated with soil chemical, physical and biological analyses. They will have significant experience in planning and executing soil and plant sampling in the field, soil and plant processing in the lab and sample preparation for specific analyses. The post-holder will have good communication skills and a proven ability to collate datasets would be advantageous.

### **2. To undertake data collection, data interpretation, and report writing**

To carry out the accurate collection and collation of research data. To prepare datasets as required and contribute to plan new research experiments.

### **3. To manage staff and resources**

To manage technical support and other staff to maximise their efficiency and delivery of tasks in compliance with all appropriate AFBI health and safety and staff management practices. To ensure that all staff and research procedures are compliant with ISO9001 in terms of standard operating procedures, risk management and related issues.

### **4. To undertake Continuous Professional Development.**

To maintain an up-to-date knowledge and awareness of developments in agri-environmental science and the impact of agriculture on soil health and soil ecosystem functioning. At a minimum, this continuous development requires keeping abreast of the relevant scientific literature. In addition, they will be required to attend training to enhance their own skills and expertise. Engagement with a range of stakeholders will also be an important aspect of the post. In addition, it will also be necessary to demonstrate professional development in relevant areas of conducting a research project.

#### **5. To fulfil other duties.**

The post-holder will be required to fulfil any other duties and responsibilities as determined by senior management that fall within the general responsibilities of the post. This job description is not intended to be rigid and inflexible, but should be regarded as providing guidelines within which the post-holder will work.

**This list is not exhaustive and the successful candidate will be required to carry out other duties as allocated by management.**

## ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA

Applicants must demonstrate that they possess the following criteria, by the closing date for applications, have:

- 1a. A minimum of a Degree in soil science, environmental science, environmental biology, agricultural science, or another appropriate related science discipline, and demonstrable experience in a soil/plant research context\*.

**OR**

- 1b. A minimum of 3 years' experience in a soil/plant research context\*.

**AND**

2. Experience of participating in research projects; to include; resource management; sampling soil and plants and collating scientific data in datasets for statistical analysis.
3. Applicants must possess a full and current driving licence and have access to a form of transport.

### Definitions

**\* This must include demonstrable knowledge with soil and plant ecology and include lab and field work experience.**

## SHORTLISTING CRITERIA

In addition applicants should be aware that should it be necessary to shortlist candidates further to go forward to interview, the Panel will carry out an objective evaluation of the breadth and depth of information provided by candidates in response to eligibility criterion 1 (experience element) and 2. This will be completed on a scored basis. Only 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), including any bibliography section, will be provided to the selection panel for the purpose of determining your eligibility for the post.**

## PERSON SPECIFICATION

### CORE COMPETENCES

Candidates will be expected to demonstrate the skills and competencies set out in the eligibility criteria. In addition, although AFBI is outside NICS, 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 2** for the purpose of personal and professional development.

#### **What is the NICS competency framework?**

The competency framework sets out how all NICS employees should work. It puts the Civil Service values of integrity, honesty, objectivity and impartiality at the heart of everything they do, and it aligns to the three high-level leadership behaviours that every civil servant needs to model as appropriate to their role and level of responsibility: Set Direction; Engage People and Deliver Results. Competencies are the skills, knowledge and behaviours that lead to successful performance. The framework outlines ten competencies, which are grouped into three clusters as set out in the link below. The competencies are intended to be discrete and cumulative, with each level building on the levels below i.e. a person demonstrating a competency at level 2 should be demonstrating levels 1 as a matter of course.

This position is analogous to Staff Officer in the NICS. Further information on the core competences for this grade can be accessed through [www.nicsrecruitment.gov.uk](http://www.nicsrecruitment.gov.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

In addition to satisfying the eligibility criteria and shortlisting criteria applicants will also be expected to display the following qualities and skills at interview:

### 1. Professional Knowledge and Skills

- Develops and updates professional/specialist/technical knowledge and skills to meet objectives and improve performance; demonstrates an in-depth knowledge and understanding of current developments and best practice.
- Applies knowledge and skills in the collection and collation of scientific data.

**Marks available: 60**

**Minimum standard: 36**

### 2. Making Effective Decisions

Effectiveness in this area is about being objective, using sound judgement, evidence and knowledge to provide accurate, expert and professional advice. It means showing clarity of thought, setting priorities, analysing and using evidence to evaluate options before arriving at well-reasoned, justifiable decisions.

**Marks Available: 10**

### 3. Leading and Communicating

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: 10**

### 4. 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 AFBI, 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: 10**

**Minimum standard: 6**

## **5. 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: 10**

**Total marks available: 100**

**Overall pass mark: 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 in AFBI HQ, Newforge Lane, Belfast in January 2022.

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

## **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 1<sup>st</sup> 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.

### **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.

### **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.

### **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 22. Applications are particularly welcomed from Roman Catholics and Females as these groups are currently under-represented within AFBI.

### **AFBI is an Equal Opportunities Employer.**

All applications for employment are considered strictly on the basis of merit.

### **Assessment Information**

It is HRConnect policy that all candidates invited to attend for assessment bring 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](http://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](http://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.

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. 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.

## **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:

[www.finance-ni.gov.uk/civilservicepensions-ni](http://www.finance-ni.gov.uk/civilservicepensions-ni)

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](mailto: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  
2<sup>nd</sup> 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](mailto:Recruitment@HRConnect.nigov.net)

**Tel:** 0800 1 300 330

**Fax:** 028 9024 1665

