



Candidate Information Booklet

IRC280634

**Horticulture Research Scientist –
Scientific Officer**

**Agri-Food and Biosciences Institute
Northern Ireland (AFBI)**

Completed Application Forms must be returned to HRConnect no later than 12 noon (UK time) on Friday 12th August 2022

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.

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FOREWORD

ABOUT THE AGRI-FOOD AND BIOSCIENCES INSTITUTE

As the Northern Ireland Government's main research and science provider in the areas of agri-food, fisheries and the environment, AFBI's science plays a crucial role in providing the underpinning statutory and analytical testing, research and development work, emergency response and expert scientific advice required to support the work of the Department of Agriculture Environment and Rural Affairs (DAERA) and the wider agri-food industry.

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 research, surveillance, and analytic and diagnostic testing for a wide range of funders 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 current Corporate Plan outlines our strategy and ambitions for the period 2018 to 2022. It sets out the 3 strategic outcomes we aim 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.

AFBI's 'Science Impacts 2020' publication outlines key outcomes from AFBI science. Notably over the past 5 years AFBI have delivered approximately four million animal, plant and food safety tests to support sales from the NI agri-food industry to the value of £3.2 billion. A key drive within AFBI is to produce high quality peer review publications while also ensuring the research conducted has impact through an active dissemination programme. Over the past 5 years, AFBI have delivered over 90 evidence and innovation projects for DAERA, approximately 400 peer review scientific publications and have secured £44m of external research grants and contracts working with partners from across 35 countries. We are 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.

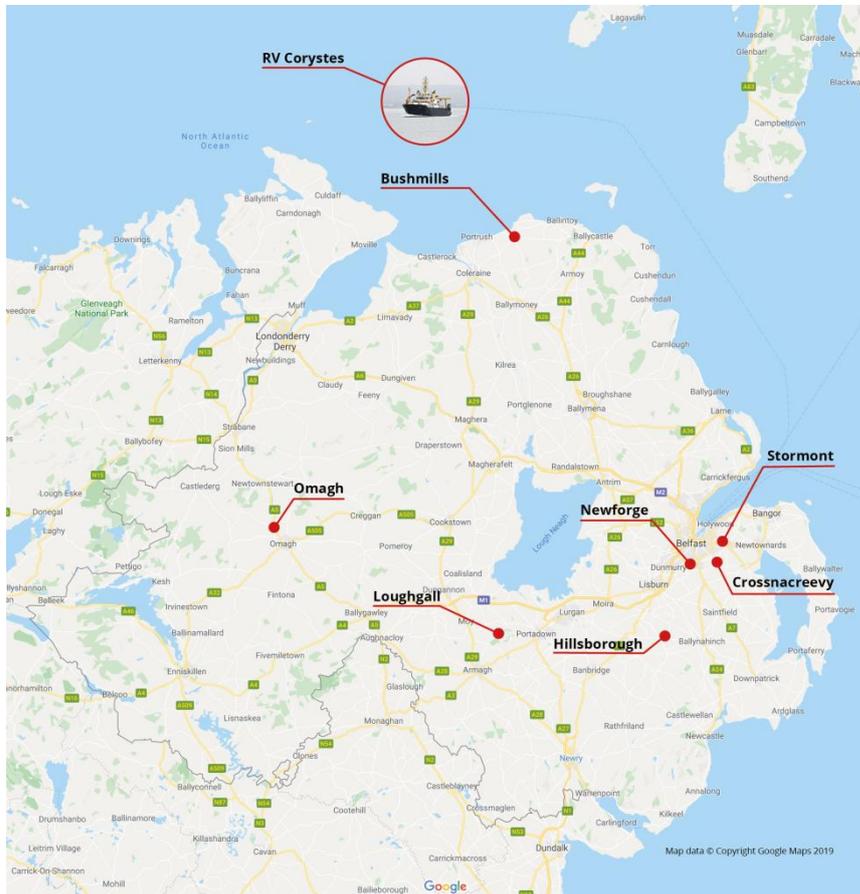
In order to fulfil these outcomes for our funders and stakeholders across society, the economy and the environment, AFBI enjoys access to highly instrumented laboratory, field and ship based scientific platforms. Furthermore, we are working closely with our sponsor department to take forward an ambitious 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 SITES

AFBI is located on seven sites across Northern Ireland with its Headquarters at Newforge Lane, Belfast.

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



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

AFBI has a current staff complement of approximately 700 people, with an annual turnover of approximately £60 million. We are currently organised across 4 divisions – Environment and Marine Sciences Division (EMSD), Sustainable Agri-Food Sciences Division (SAFSD), Veterinary Science Division (VSD), and Finance and Corporate Affairs Division (FCAD).

BRANCH BACKGROUND

ENVIRONMENT AND MARINE SCIENCES DIVISION

The Environment and Marine Sciences Division (EMSD) is a new science division, which was established in late 2020 following a review of AFBI's organisational structure. It is comprised of two branches, which have in recent years been part of the Sustainable Agri-Food Sciences Division.

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 deliver an integrated high impact programme of research spanning from the "soil to the sea".

There are two branches within EMSD;

Agri-Environment Branch – interfaces with intensive livestock production and environmental management and regulation which includes the impacts of agricultural land use practices on soil, water and air and identifies methods of optimising land-based livestock production.

Fisheries and Aquatic Ecosystems Branch – conducts research and development, monitoring and technology transfer in marine fisheries stock assessment, coastal zone science, oceanography & limnology, marine and freshwater ecosystem health, and freshwater fisheries stock assessment.

SUSTAINABLE AGRI-FOOD SCIENCES DIVISION (SAFSD)

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

The Division is a highly multidisciplinary with a focus on livestock, plant and in general agriculture production and their interactions with the environment and the economy. This multi-disciplinary team can explore all aspects of the food supply chain taking research and scientific exploration 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 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.

SAFSD includes the following branches:-

Economics Research Branch – undertakes 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 – links fundamental livestock science to systems level research to deliver innovations for the agri-food sector and advance scientific knowledge.

Food Research Branch – delivers 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 – underpins 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 – provides 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 veterinary, scientific, technical and support staff across its four branches. 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.

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.

Virology Branch – aims to improve 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 (FCAD)

FCAD 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.

FCAD includes the following branches:-

Corporate Communications Branch – 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 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 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 Branch – is responsible for the delivery 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.

Governance & 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 Branch – delivers 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 – 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 – 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.

GRASSLAND AND PLANT SCIENCES BRANCH

Grassland and Plant Sciences Branch (GPS) is one of five branches within SAFSD and provides internationally important research, scientific analysis and knowledge transfer activities across a wide range of agricultural disciplines.

The core aim of the Branch is to support programmes focussed on plant health, crop protection, grass breeding, plant testing and agronomy and horticulture. The work of Grassland and Plant Sciences (GPS) aligns closely with DAERA's four Strategic Goals: (1) Sustainable agri-food, fisheries, forestry and industrial sectors. (2) A clean, healthy environment benefiting people, nature and the economy. (3) A thriving rural economy, contributing to prosperity and wellbeing. (4) A well led, high performing organization focusing on outcomes. The branch has over 80 staff located at 3 sites (Newforge, Crossnacreevy and Loughgall) and a platform which includes land for field based grass and arable science, laboratories and specialised greenhouses, cropping and composting tunnels.

Key outputs from GPS include the provision of evidence for governmental policy development, a proactive service to protect plant health in Northern Ireland, production of new grass varieties, peer reviewed scientific papers, technical reports for industry and stakeholders, conference papers and the delivery of seminars as well as an emergency response function for DAERA. The GPS team are actively involved in national and international professional networks and expert committees. GPS are also actively involved in cross-disciplinary work through collaboration with other science branches in AFBI in areas such as animal production, agri-environment, and animal health. The GPS team collaborate nationally and internationally with a range of partners including, Queen's University Belfast, University College Dublin, Teagasc, Ulster University, University of Limerick, University College Cork and many more.

The current work programme of the branch is divided into four main scientific sections each led by project leaders:

Plant health and protection: GPS provides the statutory testing service and expert advice for DAERA on plant health matters. The unit is organised into two teams specialising on plant health surveillance and plant health diagnostics. AFBI staff provide expert advice and guidance to government on planning for, monitoring and reacting to plant health threats. Ongoing and future research covers the study and control of pathogens (fungal, bacterial, nematodes) and invertebrate pests of arable, horticulture, grass, and forestry land uses. The current emphasis is on plant pest horizon scanning, integrated pest management, the sustainable use of pesticides, and the use of bio stimulants to alleviate biotic and abiotic stresses of plants. GPS also aims to be a centre of excellence in the UK for statutory testing and research on plant parasitic nematodes. These skills are used to protect and enhance the quality of existing plants as well as to find viable alternate crops for the future needs of the industry and public.

Plant varieties and seeds testing: GPS provides research and expert advice for various functions across plant variety testing and seeds. This includes statutory work, specialist advice and innovative research at local, national and

international levels. Through a major EU H2020 project, GPS is leading the way in augmenting conventional plant testing with novel techniques which draw on advances in emerging technologies. Current and future research in complimentary areas include soil health, arable weeds and evaluation of new crops for new markets.

Grass breeding: GPS grass breeding focuses on the breeding of new varieties of forage grasses, in association with other leading international plant-breeding organisations. The AFBI grass breeding programme has been highly successful through the delivery of a portfolio of varieties with significant increases in dry matter yield, herbage quality and reduced disease susceptibility.

Horticulture: GPS horticulture provides research and specialist services to reflect the needs of the local industry, currently concentrating on the mushroom sector and the biobased economy. Part of a new major DAERA/DAFM funded project "*Beyond Peat*", GPS is collaborating with researchers across Ireland to investigate the utilisation of organic bio-resources and novel technologies to develop specifically designed and sustainable peat replacements for professional horticultural crop production.

It is predicted that food production from plants will become an increasingly important area for the NI agri-food industry. The use of land for non-livestock based food production as well as delivering ecosystems services is also expected to increase in the future. As such, it is anticipated that GPS branch will develop in the future to deliver innovative research to address the changing needs of the consumer and agri-food industry. This is therefore an exciting time to be joining the GPS team and take forward an innovative research agenda for a dramatically changing agri-food system.

JOB DESCRIPTION

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. The successful candidate will be an employee of AFBI.

Salary

The salary for the post will be within the range £27,845 - £28,730 within which pay increases will be on an incremental basis provided performance appraisals demonstrate that the employee fully meets the requirements of the post.

Starting salary will normally be at the minimum of the scale.

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

Location

The successful candidate will normally be based at AFBI Loughgall, BT61 8JB. They may also be expected to work at other sites in Northern Ireland as required

Travel

The post may entail some travel throughout the UK and Ireland 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.

Medical

The successful candidate will be required to participate in crop and composting trials where some periods of repetitive and/or physical work are required. The job requirement further involves the occasional wearing of face masks and as such the successful candidate will be required to undergo face fit testing and may be required to undergo and pass a medical assessment prior to appointment.

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

Applicants wishing to learn more about the post before deciding to apply may email AFBHR at: workforceplanning@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

KEY RESPONSIBILITIES

The post holder will report directly to the Project Leader in the Mushroom and Horticulture section in Grassland and Plant Sciences Branch, AFBI Loughgall and the main duties of the post will be:

1. Research & Development and Scientific Services Delivery

The successful candidate will provide scientific and technical support for all projects associated with the Mushroom and Horticulture research and scientific services programmes. These include research for DAERA E&I projects, DAERA/DAFM contracts and commercial trials for a range of customers. Post holder duties will entail assisting with literature reviews, industry surveys and collating summary reports within specified timeframes. The role also includes responsibility for the day-to-day management of the growing and composting facilities at AFBI Loughgall where they will supervise the set-up, treatment applications, crop assessments/sampling, harvesting and yield recording of semi-commercial (4 – 8T substrate) trials. This will include oversight for the computerised environmental control systems with some responsibility for site attendance/remote monitoring outside of standard office hours.

2. Data collection and management

The post holder will be responsible for ensuring that the trials within the programme adhere to protocols laid down by the project leader and collaborating researchers. This will include oversight of data collection, management of trial workbooks and data loggers (e.g. DAP, DL2, Tiny Tag), data collation and preparation for statistical analysis and presentation. Good IT knowledge and competence in computer programs such as Excel will be essential; experience of computerised environmental control cropping systems although an advantage is not a pre-requisite, as on the job training will be provided.

3. To manage staff and resources

The post holder will lead a small team of industrial staff, in compliance with all relevant AFBI staff management (performance reviews, managing attendance, time recording, validating training, organising workload to meet KPIs etc) and Health and Safety procedures. The latter includes preparations for ISO 9001 and Dangerous Goods Safety Advisor (DGSA) audits, contributing to RISK and Control of Substances Hazardous to Health (COSHH) assessments, Standard Operating Procedures (SoPs) etc. Responsibilities also involve co-ordinating the procurement and operation of resources and specialist equipment, ensuring these are utilised to greatest effect and efficiently maintained and that allocated budgets are handled and monitored in an auditable manner, compliant with all AFBI procedures and systems.

4. Communication with Research Groups and Stakeholders

The post holder will be required to liaise with a range of customers and providers in person, on the phone and in emails. To establish and maintain linkages with research groups and Industry stakeholders in the Republic of Ireland, the UK and internationally to ensure that collaborative research, for

example the “*Beyond Peat*” contract tasked with developing sustainable peat replacements for professional horticultural crop production, is co-ordinated. Communications will include information exchange, updates on research progress, interaction with PhD and postdoctoral researchers and handling industry queries. There will also be a requirement to work with AFBI staff from a range of work groups on cross-branch and cross-division projects.

The post holder will further contribute and assist with writing of scientific papers and knowledge transfer reports, the delivery of Scientific Services (specialist technical advice, Industry training, knowledge transfer events) and any other dissemination activities, to a wide audience of farmers, stakeholders and the scientific community.

5. To undertake continuous professional development

The post holder will be required to develop and maintain an up to date knowledge of relevant scientific literature and demonstrate continuous personal development through both formal and on the job training programmes on crop and composting technical skills, operating research trial protocols, staff and resource management, quality assurance and Health and Safety compliance.

6. To fulfil other duties

This list is not exclusive and the successful candidate will be required to carry out other duties as allocated by management that fall within the remit of the Section or the Branch. The job description is not intended to be rigid and inflexible. Rather, it should be regarded as working guidelines within which the post holder will operate.

Applicants should also be aware that the post holder will be required to work with crops and composting substances. Some intensive periods of repetitive and/or physical work are required. The job requirement further involves the occasional wearing of face masks and as such the successful candidate will be required to undergo face fit testing.

ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA

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

1. GCE 'A' level passes (A to E), in two separate subjects (one of which must be in a science discipline);
2. A minimum of 2 years' relevant experience in horticulture science or closely related area to include crop, composting or laboratory experience.
3. Experience of working and contributing to quality standards, health and safety protocols and standard operating procedures.
4. Applicants must possess a full and current driving licence.

Applications will also be considered from applicants with relevant formal qualifications considered by the selection panel to be of an equivalent or higher standard to those stated.

Relevant or **equivalent** qualifications: give the type of qualification and date awarded (the date awarded is the date on which you were notified of your result by the official awarding body). If you believe your qualification is equivalent to the one required, the onus is on you to provide the panel with details of modules studied etc. so that a well-informed decision can be made.

SHORTLISTING

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 2 and 3. 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) 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 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 3 should be demonstrating levels 1 and 2 as a matter of course.

Scientific Officer (ScO) is analogous to Executive Officer 1 in the NICS. Further information on the Core Competences for this grade can be accessed through 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. You should refer to the behaviours listed under level 2 of the relevant competence areas.

INTERVIEW CRITERIA

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

1. Professional Knowledge and Skills

- Knowledge, understanding and practical experience of horticultural crop based trials;
- Ability to develop professional/specialist/technical knowledge and skills to meet objectives and improve performance;
- Has an understanding of standardised data collection processes and procedures;
- Applies knowledge and skills in horticultural crop trials/developing data collection and identifies appropriate methods suited to the current situation;
- Demonstrates initiative in introducing improvements in horticultural crop/laboratory based activities.

Marks Available: 40 Minimum Standard: 24

2. Leading and Communicating

- Display enthusiasm around goals and activities – adopting a positive approach when interacting with others;
- Express ideas effectively, choosing appropriate communication methods both orally and in writing, with sensitivity and respect for others;
- Listen to, understand, respect and accept the value of different views, ideas and ways of working; Write clearly in plain, simple language and check work for spelling and grammar, learning from previous inaccuracies;
- Confidently handle challenging conversations or interactions.

Marks Available: 10

3. Making Effective Decisions

- Demonstrate accountability and make unbiased decisions;
- Make and record effective decisions following the appropriate decision making criteria, framework or guidance;
- Speak with the relevant people in order to obtain the most accurate information and get advice when unsure of how to proceed;
- Undertake appropriate analysis to support decisions or recommendations;
- Explain clearly, verbally and in writing, how a decision has been reached and query those constructively;
- Logically think through the implications of own decisions before confirming how to approach a problem/issue.

Marks Available: 10 Minimum Standard: 6

4. Delivering at Pace

- Work in an organised manner using own knowledge and expertise to deliver on time and to standard;
- Take responsibility for delivering expected outcomes on time and keep manager informed of how the work is progressing;
- Plan ahead but reassess workloads and priorities if situations change or demands are conflicting;
- Work with enthusiasm to get the job completed successfully;
- Maintain consistent performance;
- Participate fully in quality assurance of products or services.

Marks Available: 10 Minimum Standard: 6

5. Managing a Quality Service

- Work with team to set priorities, create clear plans and manage all work to meet the needs of the delivery partners, customers and the business, keeping all fully informed of plans and possibilities;
- Gain the knowledge needed to follow and promote adherence to the relevant legislation, policies, procedures and rules that apply to the job;
- Identify common problems or weaknesses in policy or procedures that affect service and escalate these;
- Ensure that levels of service are maintained – flag up risks or concerns in order to meet customer/collaborator requirements.

Marks Available: 10

6. Collaborating and Partnering

- Establish relationships with a broad range of stakeholders to support delivery of all work programmes;
- Communicate in a way that meets and anticipates the customer's /collaborator's requirements and gives a favourable impression of AFBI;
- Adapt ways of working to facilitate collaboration for the benefit of the team, acting to prevent problems and reporting issues where necessary;
- Take ownership of issues, focus on providing the right solution and keep customers and delivery partners up to date with progress.

Marks Available: 10 Minimum Standard: 6

Total Marks Available: 90 Overall Minimum Standard: 54

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 during week commencing Monday 12th September 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.
- Where qualifications form part of the eligibility/shortlisting criteria, candidates will be required to provide documentary evidence, if invited to interview.

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.

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 29.

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.

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.

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 Minimum Standard 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

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
Beacon House
27 Clarendon Road
Belfast
BT1 3BG

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.