



Department of
**Agriculture, Environment
and Rural Affairs**

www.daera-ni.gov.uk

Public Appointments Guidance Notes for Applicants

Please read these Notes for Applicants before you complete the application form.

If you have any difficulty reading this guidance, alternatives (e.g. large print) can be arranged. Please contact us at the address/ telephone number given in the candidate pack.

Your application form should be emailed to the address given in the candidate pack.

Candidates are responsible for the timely and safe arrival of their applications.

Late applications will not be accepted.

1. Interviews

Please note the interview dates given in the candidate pack and be aware that only in exceptional circumstances will the panel consider interviewing on different or additional days.

2. Meetings

The Department needs to be certain that you are able to give the proper time commitment and are able to travel to meetings, as specified in the candidate pack. However, as part of our commitment to improve diversity on the boards of our public bodies we are happy to consider any reasonable requests that would enable someone to attend meetings (or in the first instance, an interview) where they might not otherwise be able to do so. This could be anything from teleconference facilities in the building where meetings are held, the times that meetings are held or possible assistance with additional childcare or carer costs.

Please contact us at the address in the candidate pack to discuss what options may be available. This information will not affect our assessment of your suitability for appointment and will not be disclosed to the Advisory Assessment Panel (unless specific arrangements are made in relation to the interview which the panel would need to be aware of).

3. Addressing the criteria

For each of the published criteria in the role specification, please give relevant examples of your personal involvement and impact. We ask this because the Advisory Assessment Panel will assess your suitability for appointment by scoring your responses against the criteria listed in the candidate pack. These skills and achievements could have been obtained from a range of activities and not simply from a 'traditional' background or career path.

Many people are not used to writing about themselves or describing what they have achieved. The following guidance will be of help when completing your answers:

- Review the selection criteria before preparing your responses;
- Provide at least one example for each of the criteria;
- The same example (provided it is relevant) can be used to demonstrate how you meet two or more selection criteria;
- There may be several aspects to a criterion so ensure you provide evidence that shows you meet all of it;

- Use actual examples that show how you meet the criteria, describe what you personally did and the impact it had. Think in terms of outcomes and achievements;
- Avoid personal attitudes and opinions or saying how you would do something;
- Examples can be drawn from any aspect of your experience, be it education, work, leisure, community or voluntary activity etc.;
- Do not assume that the reader has any prior knowledge;
- Use simple and easy to understand language, avoid jargon; and
- Make sure your responses are legible and that you keep a copy for yourself.

The key to a good application is to give the reader specific information about how you meet the criteria for appointment. Think about your knowledge, skills, experience and personal attributes and make sure you take full advantage of the word count available to provide practical evidence that best demonstrates how you meet the selection criteria.

4. Skills, knowledge and experience.

Please ensure your responses are relevant to the criteria in question. This will enable us to get a better idea of you as an individual and the unique skills you possess and gives you the opportunity to include any additional information you feel is relevant to your application.

5. Conflicts of Interest.

Public appointments require the highest standards of propriety, involving impartiality, integrity and objectivity, in relation to stewardship of public funds and the oversight and management of all related activities. This means that any private, voluntary, charitable or political interest that might be material and relevant to the work of the body concerned should be declared.

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

It is important, therefore, that you consider your circumstances when applying for a public appointment and identify any potential conflicts of interest, whether real or perceived. No one should use or give the appearance of using, their public position to further their private interests.

All Board members are therefore required to declare any personal or business interest, which may or may not be perceived to influence their independence. This is to protect both the organisation and the individuals involved from any appearance of impropriety. This is an area of particular importance, as it is of considerable concern to the public and can receive a lot of media attention.

Declaring a conflict of interest will not automatically preclude an individual from being considered for appointment but candidates must be prepared for the issue to be explored further at interview.

If you are unsure whether your circumstances constitute a possible conflict, you should still complete this question in the application form, in order for it to be discussed with you at an interview if you are shortlisted.

Failure to declare a conflict would be considered on its merits, but the Department may take the view that by concealing a conflict of interest, you would be deemed to have breached the Seven Principles of Conduct Underpinning Public life and the Department may therefore terminate your appointment.

Areas where a conflict could arise

There are five main issues that could lead to a real or apparent conflict of interests:

- relevant financial or other interests outside the organisation;
- relationships with other parties/ organisations which could lead to perceived or real split loyalties;
- access to information on pending Government Policy could give unfair personal advantage to people with business interests likely to be affected;
- perception of rewards for past contributions or favours; or
- membership of some societies.

In considering whether a danger of real or potential conflict exists members should assess whether they, a close family member, a person living in the same household as the board member, or a firm, business or organisation with which the board member is connected are likely to be affected by the decisions or advice made or given by the board. In addition, board members should consider whether they need to disclose relevant interests of other persons or organisations that members of the public might reasonably think could influence the member's judgement.

6. Where did you hear about this appointment?

In order for us to monitor the effectiveness of our methods of advertising and recruitment it would be helpful if you could specify how you first heard about this vacancy.

7. Equal Opportunity Monitoring

These forms will be separated on receipt from your application form and not be seen by the Advisory Assessment Panel.

8. Political Activity.

Whether you are politically active in any way will not be a factor in the consideration of your application. A form recording political activity will only be issued by the Department to be completed by the successful applicant once the Minister's decision is made and the information will be included in the public announcement of the appointment. If no political activity has been declared, this must likewise be included in the public announcement.

9. Guaranteed Interview Scheme (GIS) for Disabled candidates

The aim of the GIS is to provide applicants with a disability the opportunity to demonstrate their abilities beyond the initial application stage. Applicants with a disability who meet the criteria at stage one of the selection process (the sift process) will automatically be offered an interview. Their application will not be subjected to any short-listing which may take place.

Declaring a disability for the purpose of qualifying for the GIS is your decision and is entirely voluntary.

To be eligible for the GIS you must be considered as disabled under the Disability Discrimination Act 1995 which defines a person with a disability as someone who has, or has had in the past, a physical or mental impairment which has had a substantial long-term adverse effect on their ability to carry out normal day to day activities. This includes sensory impairments, people who have had a disability in the past even though they are no longer disabled, people whose disability is likely to last for twelve months or rest of their life, and people whose condition is likely to progress or recur. Severe disfigurement is also acknowledged as a disability.