

Public Appointments Guidance Notes For Applicants



Department
for Environment
Food & Rural Affairs

Please read these Notes for Guidance before you prepare your Curriculum Vitae and personal statement.

Please pay particular attention to the section on conflicts of interest.

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 information pack.

Your Curriculum Vitae and Personal Statement should be emailed or arrive via post, by the closing date stated, to the address given in the information 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 information 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 information 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 information 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 sift or interview panels (unless specific arrangements are made in relation to the interview which the panel would need to be aware of).

3. Addressing the criteria – your personal statement. 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 Selection Panel will assess your suitability for appointment by comparing the information you give in your Curriculum Vitae (CV) and personal statement against the criteria. 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 CV and personal statement:

- Review the selection criteria before preparing your CV and Statement;
- 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 CV and personal statement is 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 space available to provide practical evidence that best demonstrates how you meet the selection criteria.

4. Career and experience. Please supply your CV with your personal statement made relevant to the post 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 Diversity Monitoring Questionnaire, in order for it to be discussed with you at an interview if you are short listed.

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. These are:
 - 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;
 - 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. Referees. Please give details of two people who may be asked to act as referees for you, including e-mail addresses and telephone numbers. One of these referees should be a business or professional contact. Referees will not be contacted unless you are invited for interview.

7. Cabinet Office database of potential appointees. Cabinet Office holds a database of people who have expressed an interest in a public appointment should something suitable arise, or who have been unsuccessful when applying for one appointment but may be interested in being considered for others. Please contact Cabinet Office at publicappointments@cabinet-office.gsi.gov.uk if you would like your details to be held on record.

8. 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.

Diversity Monitoring Questionnaire – These forms will be separated on receipt from your CV and personal statement and not be seen by the sift and interview panel.

Political Activity

Whether you are politically active in any way will not be a factor in the consideration of your application. Information on political activity is requested as required by the Commissioner for Public Appointments. This information will only be made available to the panel for those applicants selected for interview.

Guaranteed Interview Scheme (GIS) for Disabled candidates

Definitions of disabilities as defined under the Equality Act 2010 (The Act)

The Equality Act 2010 defines a disabled person as someone who has a physical or mental impairment that has a substantial and long-term adverse effect on his or her ability to carry out normal day-to-day activities.

For the purposes of the Act:

- A substantial effect is one that is greater than the effect that would be produced by the sort of physical or mental conditions experienced by many people, which have only 'minor' or 'trivial' effects.
- Long term means that the effect of the impairment has lasted or is likely to last for at least 12 months (there are special rules covering recurring or fluctuating conditions)
- Under the Act certain people meet the definition of disability without having to show that they have an impairment that has (or is likely to have) a substantial, adverse, long-term effect on their ability to carry out normal day-to-day activities. A person who is certified as blind, severely sight impaired, sight impaired or partially sighted by a consultant ophthalmologist is deemed to have a disability.
- In general, day-to-day activities are things people do on a regular or daily basis and examples include shopping, reading and writing, having a conversation or using the telephone, watching television, getting washed and dressed, preparing and eating food, carrying out household tasks, walking and travelling by various forms of transport, and taking part in social activities.
- People with HIV, cancer and multiple sclerosis are covered by the Act from the point of diagnosis, rather than from the point when the condition has some adverse effect on their ability to carry out normal day-to-day activities.
- Some conditions, such as a tendency to set fires and hay fever, are specifically excluded.
- People who have had a disability in the past that meets this definition are also covered by the scope of the Act. There are additional provisions relating to people with progressive conditions.

As a “Two Ticks” disability symbol user, Defra guarantees an interview to anyone with disability whose application meets the minimum criteria for the post. If you wish to apply for consideration under the scheme, please complete the declaration form (attached to the Diversity Monitoring Questionnaire). In addition, if you require any special arrangements, if invited to the interview, please let us know so that appropriate arrangements can be made.