

RECRUITMENT POLICY



1. Policy Statement

The Electoral Office for Northern Ireland (EONI) is committed to ensuring compliance with relevant employment and equality legislation in carrying out recruitment and selection procedures outlined in this policy.

2. Purpose and scope of Policy

This policy provides a framework for filling permanent and temporary positions, including level transfers and secondments. The policy does not include staff procured under service contracts or deputising arrangements.

3. Recruitment Procedure

When a vacancy arises consideration will be given to the need to fill it and a decision will be made by the Chief Electoral Officer. A decision to establish a new post or to de-establish an existing position will be taken by the Chief Electoral Officer with the advice of the Management Board. NIPSA will be consulted before any decision is reached to de-establish a post. The job description and person specification is reviewed and the following stages adhered to in the recruitment procedure:

- i) Advertising
- ii) Processing Applications
- iii) Appointment Process

i) Advertising

The types of recruitment exercises covered by the policy relate to internal selection and open competition. EONI recognises the need to provide opportunities for staff and all vacancies will normally be circulated to permanent

staff for a level transfer opportunity before a recruitment exercise is undertaken. EONI is committed to fair and open competition which is consistent with our obligation to provide development opportunities for staff. All permanent employees are recruited through fair and open competition; however, not all vacancies are automatically advertised externally.

Internal Selection

Temporary vacancies, which are expected to last up to a maximum of 12 months, may be filled through an internal advertisement which is circulated among permanent staff. Most temporary promotions are subject to an assessment process, however, there may be occasions when an employee can be temporarily promoted without necessarily going through a formal assessment procedure eg, specialised position, person already deputising, or if there is an urgent need for the post to be covered immediately.

Open Competition

All permanent vacancies, and temporary/fixed term vacancies (which are expected to last for more than 12 months), will normally be advertised externally. Methods of advertising media used will depend on the post but may include all or any of the following – newspapers, job centres, websites etc. All vacancies will be advertised on EONI website. Normally only posts at EOII (Executive Officer 2) equivalent or higher will be advertised in the three Northern Ireland daily newspapers ie, Belfast Telegraph, Newsletter and Irish News. Specialist media may also be used for advertising as and when required, eg Association of Electoral Administrators, and local organisations eg minority groups.

During election periods vacancies are filled through a re-appointment process of available experienced staff who have been recruited through fair and open competition and retained on a pool of qualified staff. Additional staff where required will, when practicable, be recruited through the open competition procedure outlined above and retained in the pool.

Where an affirmative action statement is required, this will be inserted in the advertisement inviting applications from particular under-represented groups. The advertisement will also contain location, salary and, if appropriate, if the vacancy may be offered as a secondment opportunity. As a general rule, an individual on secondment to EONI:

- Continues to be be paid by their home organisation which is reimbursed by EONI, normally lasting not more than 3 years;
- Is subject to the contractual terms and conditions of their home organisation;
- Is subject to EONI's policies, procedures and rules and line managed on a day-to-day basis by an EONI manager.

ii) Processing Applications

All application forms are accompanied by an applicant information pack which provides comprehensive information to applicants. Information packs may be downloaded from EONI's website or posted out on request. Application forms may be submitted by hand, post or electronically. The Human Resources Officer has responsibility for the recruitment process and all applications for employment are handled by the HR Section. The vacancy is assigned to the HR Assistant who will carry out all clerical and administrative duties in relation to processing applications, including checking to ensure the application is fully completed, and meets nationality requirements. All eligible application forms are assigned a reference number and entered onto the recruitment database.

Shortlisting

The HR Officer will identify panel members for a competition (see Annex A). The panel is provided with anonymised applications for each applicant and a draft shortlisting matrix based on the required criteria. The panel must agree the matrix. Shortlisting may be done individually but the panel must meet to agree the final shortlist if there is any difference between the individual results. The final decision form should be returned by the Chair with all

signed shortlisting papers. In some cases, due to the number of applications received and/or work pressures, the HR Section may carry out an initial sift of applications which meet the essential shortlisting criteria; however, the panel will agree the final list of candidates who will be invited to interview.

Selection Tests

Use of selection tests will be related to the requirements of the job eg count testing, presentation skills, typing test etc. Consideration may therefore be given to using job-related selection tests in the assessment of candidates to test competency or skill in a particular area.

Interview

In advance of the interview, it will be necessary for the panel to agree lead questions and assign weights/scores for each criterion in order to score candidates. Individual pass marks for criteria may be assigned for minimum standards. An overall pass mark must also be agreed. The interview questions and scoring sheet will be prepared by the HR Section in conjunction with the panel Chairperson. Each panel member should record (without consultation with other panel members) a separate score against each criterion for each interviewee. The panel should then, through consensus, reach and record an overall agreed panel mark. Panel members should fully complete, sign and date their interview assessment papers. The Chair should complete the Panel Decision Form, placing candidates in order of merit, which should be returned with all signed assessment papers to the HR Officer. The decision of the selection panel is final and the marking frame will be validated by the HR Officer against panel scores before preliminary offers are made.

A reserve list may be retained in relation to recruitment competitions and should a vacancy arise for a similar post at the same grade within twelve months of the date of the panel decision, a reserve candidate may be offered the position in merit order.

Post-Interview

The successful candidate will be contacted verbally by telephone (usually by the HR Officer). This will be followed up with a formal written provisional offer. Requests for interview feedback should be made in writing to the HR Officer, who will refer the request to the panel Chairperson to provide a written or, where appropriate, oral response. Copy correspondence should be sent to the HR Officer for the recruitment file.

iii) Appointment Process

A preliminary offer will be made in writing subject to a number of pre-employment formalities being satisfactory to EONI including:

Health Declaration - Candidates for appointment must be fit to carry out the duties of the post and give regular and effective service. However, EONI has an obligation under disability discrimination legislation to identify reasonable adjustments necessary to overcome any obstacle for a particular individual in a specific job. EONI reserves the right to refer a candidate to the Occupational Health Service or other expert for a pre-employment health assessment.

Security Checks - The Chief Electoral Officer is responsible for the determination of the vetting level of EONI posts. The Baseline Security Standard is sufficient for the majority of posts. This is a check of the candidate's identity, employment history, nationality and immigration including a Criminal Record Check. EONI will forward an Access NI application for a basic disclosure certificate only which shows details of all convictions considered to be unspent under the Rehabilitation of Officers (NI) Order 1978. Some posts may require CTC (Counter Terrorist Check) clearance which is Baseline as above plus check of security service records processed by the Defence Vetting Agency as opposed to Access NI. Having a criminal record will not necessarily bar an application for appointment due to an unspent

conviction. The nature of the conviction and its relevance to the post will need to be considered.

Nationality/Work Permit - EONI must ensure that applicants satisfy nationality criteria. Posts are open to UK Nationals, Commonwealth citizens, EEA nationals or Swiss nationals. This also includes some Turkish nationals and certain family members of EEA or Swiss Nationals. Family member of an EEA national means that national's spouse or a direct descendant (child, grandchild etc) of that national or a dependent relative in the ascending line (parent, grandparent etc). In addition to ensuring that appointees satisfy nationality requirements, there is a further requirement to ensure that those appointed do not contravene immigration legislation and are legally entitled to work in the UK. For example, whilst applicants from Commonwealth Countries may satisfy nationality requirements, they may also require work permits to legally work in the UK. Further guidance may be obtained from the Home Office website www.ind.homeoffice.gov.uk.

In addition to the above the HR Officer will also request evidence of the successful candidate's qualifications and a formal offer will not normally be made until all pre-employment enquiries are complete and satisfactory to EONI.

Starting Salary

External appointees will normally commence at the minimum point of the scale. Internal candidates will be entitled to a % increase on their existing salary in accordance with current NICS policy.

4. Election Staff

The re-appointment of election staff and appointment of staff from election reserve lists will be administered by the appropriate Area Electoral Office.

The basis for selection may include relevant experience, past performance, preferred choice, car availability and distance willing to travel. Care should be taken when selecting staff to ensure that a note of the basis for selecting successful staff and rejecting others is made and placed on the appropriate file. Where a successful candidate has a disability for which adjustments may need to be considered, advice should be sought from the HR Officer.

5. Conflict of Interest

EONI staff must not have been engaged in political activity during the last ten years. Political activity includes –

- being a councillor, MLA, MP or MEP
- standing as a candidate to become any of the above
- acting as an election agent
- holding any office in a political party or any branch of a political party
- canvassing or speaking on behalf of a political party or candidate
- helping a political party or candidate at an election.
- making a recordable donation to a political party

Membership of a political party is not, however, regarded as political activity. EONI staff must not engage in any political activity as defined above during the course of their employment.

EONI fully recognises and respects the right of all staff to become members of societies or organisations. However staff, including applicants, must declare personal interests where there is, or could be perceived to be, a conflict of interest between their duties as an employee and their membership of a particular organisation.

6. Retention of Records and Confidentiality

All original papers relating to a recruitment exercise will be retained for a period of three years after the date the candidate is offered appointment. Duplicate application forms which have been used by the selection panel may be shredded or disposed of as confidential waste. Documentation will be treated with the strictest confidence and papers may be disclosed to assist with the resolution of any complaint.

This policy has been agreed with NIPSA and will be reviewed every three years, or more frequently, with the agreement of both parties.

Signed: *Douglas Bain CBE TD Advocate*
Chief Electoral Officer

Signed: *Robin McClelland*
NIPSA

Dated: *1st March 2010*

Dated: *26th February 2010*

ANNEX A

Recommended Composition of Selection Panels

Selection panels should normally comprise at least two persons and one member must have a recognised competency in the core area of the post to be filled. All panel members must have attended formal training in recruitment and selection including equality legislation and its implications. Normally, the Chairperson should be two ranks above the grade to be recruited and other panel members should ideally be one grade above. External panel members should be of 'standing' in their profession. The HR Officer is responsible for providing professional HR advice and guidance to panel members and, ideally, one member of a panel should be experienced in HR issues. Any panel member who feels that their knowledge of a candidate would seriously compromise their objectivity must withdraw.

GRADE	APPROPRIATE PANEL MEMBERS (Minimum Requirements)
Grade A	Chief Electoral Officer; Assistant CEO; Independent Panel Member
Deputy Principal	Chief Electoral Officer; Assistant CEO; Independent Panel Member
Staff Officer	Assistant CEO (Line Manager); DP and/or Human Resources Officer
EO1/EO2	Assistant CEO; Area Electoral Officer (Line Manager) and/or SO from another part of EONI
Administrative Officers/ Electoral Assistants	EO1 or 2 / Line Manager; EO1 or 2 from another part of EONI

Each panel should, as far as reasonably possible, be representative of both gender and community background.