



Invest 
Northern
Ireland
Building Locally
Competing Globally

Progress Report on Invest NI's Recruitment and Selection Equality Impact Assessment (EQIA)

May 2006

Section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998

INTRODUCTION

Invest Northern Ireland (Invest NI) is Northern Ireland's new economic development agency. Established in April 2002 under the Industrial Development Act (Northern Ireland) 2002, it is a Non-Departmental Public Body (NDPB) operating under a Board and is a body corporate. Invest NI performs the functions previously carried out separately by the Industrial Development Board (IDB), the Local Enterprise Development Unit (LEDU), the Industrial Research and Technology Unit (IRTU), the Business Support Division of the Department of Enterprise Trade and Investment and the business support functions of the Northern Ireland Tourist Board (NITB). Its sponsoring Department is the Department of Enterprise Trade and Investment (DETI).

BACKGROUND

Invest NI has an Equality Scheme in place which sets out its commitment to the Section 75 Statutory Equality Duties and contains a timetable for undertaking a series of Equality Impact Assessments (EQIAs). The Equality Scheme was ratified by the Equality Commission for Northern Ireland on 19 November 2003.

In line with the EQIA timetable, Invest NI has carried out an EQIA of its Recruitment & Selection Policy during 2004. The aim of this Policy is:

“to recruit and select staff using fair and equitable procedures that promote equality of opportunity and ensure that the most suitable person is appointed or promoted.”

The draft EQIA went out for 12 week consultation period on 10 September 2004. However, the consultation period was extended to allow feedback to be obtained from internal staff focus groups.

Following the close of the consultation period (December 2004) a final report was produced and published in September 2005. This final report outlined the actions/recommendations which Invest NI committed to take forward and to monitor on an annual basis.

CURRENT POSITION

Invest NI has now undertaken a review of the actions/recommendations contained in the final report and would like to highlight the progress made to date against each recommendation. The table below outlines progress made up to March 2006:

RECOMMENDATIONS/ACTIONS AND PROGRESS TABLE

Recommendation	Action	Progress up to 31/03/06
1	<i>We will continue to ensure that recruitment and selection procedures are open, transparent and relevant and that these provide equality of opportunity for all applicants.</i>	Invest NI's Recruitment and Selection Process has been open and transparent since the organisation's inception in 2002, and demonstrates our commitment to equality of opportunity and fair treatment for all. The merit principle is applied in all our recruitment and selection processes.
2	<i>Advertisements for all posts to state that application forms are available in alternative formats and will indicate how they may be obtained.</i>	All advertisements state that applications are available in alternative formats and state how they may be obtained.
3	<i>Staff on duty to be notified of all vacancies via email. Vacancies will be placed on the website and Intranet as appropriate and any member of staff who is not on duty can check daily newspapers for advertisements.</i>	Since April 2002, all staff on duty have been notified of all vacancies via email. Vacancies are placed on the website and intranet and in newspapers as appropriate.
4	<i>Where appropriate and lawful, affirmative and/or positive action advertising to be used. At this time, we will specifically welcome applicants from minority racial groups, persons with a disability and, for Senior Management posts, applications from females.</i>	At present, in its general recruitment advertising, Invest NI specifically welcomes applications from minority racial groups and people with disabilities. Since November 2005, we have also welcomed applications from females for senior management posts.

<p>5</p>	<p><i>We will advertise jobs widely but in an effective and efficient manner. The current practice of advertising posts in the Irish News, Belfast Telegraph and News Letter will continue for the next 6 months. The effectiveness and impact of advertising will then be assessed and reviewed.</i></p>	<p>In January 2006, Invest NI's Internal Communications Team provided a "Media Strategy Review". This indicated that the most effective means of obtaining a wide pool of applicants via press advertising was to continue with the current practice of advertising in the Irish News, the Belfast Telegraph and the Newsletter. In order to assess the ongoing effectiveness of our advertising, at the beginning of 2006, we commenced gathering data on where the applicant saw the job advertised. The impact of advertising will be reviewed again (June 2006) based on the data collected.</p>
<p>6</p>	<p><i>Internal trawls for posts will only operate in limited circumstances and normally where this action may avoid a potential redundancy or in situations of restructuring or redeployment within the existing Invest NI headcount.</i></p>	<p>Invest NI continues with the practice of operating internal trawls only in very specific circumstances. In general, posts are advertised externally in order to attract the widest possible pool of applicants. At the beginning of 2006, Invest NI found itself in the position of having to fill a number of posts at a time when it also had to reduce its staff numbers. A small number of internal trawls were operated in January 2006 in order to facilitate redeployment of employee resources.</p>

<p>7</p>	<p><i>We will ensure that the Knowledge, Skills, Experience and job specific Competences (KSECs) Assessment Framework, currently under development, will reflect guidance as contained in the statutory Codes of Practice, be non-discriminatory, transparent, promote equality of opportunity and be objective where possible. Staff will be fully briefed about any change before it takes place.</i></p>	<p>Work on the “Knowledge, Skills, Experience and job specific Competences Assessment Framework” is ongoing. Prior to advertising, all proposed selection criteria are assessed to ensure that they are strictly job related, objective, non-discriminatory, and promote equality of opportunity.</p>
<p>8</p>	<p><i>We will prepare improved guidelines for all applicants to help them understand criterion-based selection. We will also provide clarity as to the skills, knowledge and behaviours which are considered essential and desirable criteria for shortlisting, and make these explicit to candidates.</i></p>	<p>Guidelines for applicants are quite comprehensive and detailed to enable them to clearly understand criterion-based selection. It is proposed to review the guidelines with a view to improving them further in the coming months. Since April 2002, the applicant pack has set out and made explicit the skills, knowledge and behaviours which are essential and desirable criteria for appointment. Since 2004, the applicant pack has explicitly stated which criteria will be used for shortlisting. Candidates are also provided with clear instructions on how the application form should be completed.</p>
<p>9</p>	<p><i>The scoring frame will be reviewed to provide consistency across each selection exercise.</i></p>	<p>The scoring frame will be reviewed in Autumn 2006.</p>

<p>10</p>	<p><i>A consistent approach will be adopted to contact all candidates, whether internal or external.</i></p>	<p>All candidates are contacted by letter to their home address. Candidates who are at the same stage of the process are contacted in the same manner and at the same time.</p>
<p>11</p>	<p><i>Our Recruitment and selection website job board will be linked to the Intranet; vacancies will also be posted on appropriate jobsites.</i></p>	<p>Jobs have been posted on Invest NI's own website for some time and on the Nijobs recruitment website since 2005. In April 2006, the recruitment and selection website job board was linked with our Intranet site.</p>
<p>12</p>	<p><i>Standard letter templates will be developed for each stage of the recruitment process.</i></p>	<p>Standard letter templates for each stage of the recruitment process are now in place.</p>
<p>13</p>	<p><i>The information pack for candidates will include a summary of invest NI's Equal Opportunities Policy, a description of the role and of the skills, expertise and qualifications required. We will also endeavour to give best estimates of recruitment and selection timescales to applicants.</i></p>	<p>Since 2002, the information pack for applicants has included a description of the role, the skills, expertise and qualifications required. Since November 2005, we have also included a summary of Invest NI's Equal Opportunities Policy in the pack. To maximise candidate attendance at interview, since April 2006, we have included approximate dates for the various stages of the selection process in the letter to applicants.</p>

<p>14</p>	<p><i>We will include within the 'Information for Applicants' pack for each vacancy an explanation as to how evidence of past convictions will be assessed. Our recruitment and selection training will be modified to cover this and provide selection panel members and HR staff with the necessary legal knowledge. We will adapt our Recruitment and Selection Policy by including a statement of non-discrimination to ensure equitable treatment for those who have disclosed details of criminal convictions.</i></p>	<p>The area of how evidence of past convictions will be reviewed during 2006/07.</p>
<p>15</p>	<p><i>Applicants requesting specific feedback on their performance against the selection criteria for a particular post will be provided with this.</i></p>	<p>Since 2002, we have provided specific feedback to applicants on their performance against the selection criteria for a particular post. Within the last year we have developed a letter template for this purpose, which is amended to allow specific and constructive feedback to be given on an individual basis.</p>
<p>16</p>	<p><i>A comprehensive monitoring and data management system, tracking applicants from application through to appointment, will be applied and will cover all nine Section 75 dimensions.</i></p>	<p>Applicants are currently monitored from application to appointment, however at this time, the monitoring covers gender and perceived religious affiliation only. It is anticipated that an upgrade to the Spring software system, which is expected by June 2006, will facilitate more comprehensive monitoring and data management.</p>

<p>17</p>	<p><i>At this time we will continue to monitor closely the success rates of older candidates to identify and remove any barriers to fair selection.</i></p>	<p>This action is linked to point 16 above, and as such has not been actioned to date.</p>
<p>18</p>	<p><i>All selection panel members will have to attend training and refresher courses. Refresher courses will normally be held within two years of initial training. This training will include reference to section 75 and associated legislation and will be tailored to our procedures.</i></p>	<p>All selection panel members attend criterion-based interview training courses on a regular basis. All panel members receive training prior to sitting on interview panels. The HR Representative provides feedback to panel members on their performance, and training updates are provided as appropriate.</p>
<p>19</p>	<p><i>Where external consultants are employed, we will ensure that all selection techniques are valid and reliable.</i></p>	<p>Where external consultants are engaged, the tender process requires all those tendering to demonstrate that selection techniques are valid and reliable. This has been the situation since 2002.</p>
<p>20</p>	<p><i>At least one representative of the Human Resources department will be in attendance at all of our selection panels.</i></p>	<p>Since December 2005, it has been a formal requirement of the recruitment and selection process that a representative of the HR team is in attendance at all selection panels. This was not a process change, but the formalisation of an existing arrangement.</p>

<p>21</p>	<p><i>The Human Resources Director will set the starting salary for a successful candidate and apply any recommendations of the current equal pay review programme.</i></p>	<p>The Human Resources Director has overall responsibility for ensuring that the starting salaries for successful candidates are appropriate, taking into consideration the candidates' experience and qualifications, the job role and pay equality throughout the organisation.</p>
<p>22</p>	<p><i>We will prepare a policy statement on the use of reserve lists. The Human Resources department will make clear how it will choose from candidates with the same scores.</i></p>	<p>At present, reserve lists remain live for up to 12 months following the selection decision, with the option to extend for a further short period if appropriate. The JNCC Policy Group will prepare a policy statement in relation to the use of reserve lists over the next few months.</p> <p>Written guidelines now state that, where candidates have been awarded the same score, the selection panel reviews and reconsiders the scores awarded during the relevant part of the selection process. The scores are then revised according to merit, with the end result that no two candidates have the same score.</p>
<p>23</p>	<p><i>We will include a text phone number on all correspondence. Guidelines are currently being drafted to make Information more accessible. This Policy will include communication protocols on the use of text phone. In the interim, HR will amend Recruitment and Selection procedures as necessary.</i></p>	<p>A text phone was installed in March 2006 and the number has been included on all recruitment advertisements since April 2006. Text phone details will be incorporated into all applicant information packs with effect from May 2006. Text phone details have not yet been included on other correspondence.</p>

24	<i>We will work closely with the Equality Commission during 2005-06 to implement an appropriate programme of action to address under-representation issues that may be identified.</i>	Following the analysis of Section 55 Report in June 2006, a decision will be taken on whether action is required to address any other representation issues which may be identified. Should further action be necessary, we will work closely with the Equality Commission.
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INFORMATION

If you would like to view the draft Recruitment & Selection EQIA or the Recruitment & Selection EQIA Final Report, you can do so by accessing the Invest NI website at:

www.investni.com/equality

Alternatively, you can obtain a hard copy of the reports by contacting:

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If you have any queries about this document and/or its availability in alternative formats (including Braille, disk, audio cassette or in minority languages to meet the needs of those who are not fluent in English), then please contact the Equality Team at the above mentioned address.



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