

Guidance on Conflicts of Interest

When you apply for a public appointment you will be asked if you are aware of any possible conflicts of interest which may arise in connection with the board position. Conflicts of interest are not normally a barrier to appointment but the selection panel will explore both real and perceived conflicts of interest to ensure that the public can have confidence in the board's independence and impartiality.

Here are a few examples of areas which could lead to a real or apparent conflict of interest:

- financial or other interests with the public body concerned
- relationships with other organisations or individuals which could lead to perceived or real split loyalties
- perception of rewards for past contributions or favours
- membership of some societies or organisations.

Some examples of potential, real or perceived conflicts of interest are:

- you are the director of a building firm and you have applied to sit on the board of a body which regularly purchases building materials – *you could benefit personally from decisions taken by the board.*
- you are a manager in a voluntary organisation and have applied to sit on the board of the body that will allocate your funding – *the body you work for could benefit financially from the decisions taken by the board.*

- you are the director of a pharmaceutical company and have applied to sit of the board of the body which will direct government policy on medical research – *your company could have access to information which would give it a commercial advantage over its rivals.*
- you have, in the past, contributed significant funds to the political party to which the Minister making the board appointment belongs – *your appointment could be viewed as a reward for past favours.*
- you and a member of the selection panel are both members of an organisation whose membership is kept secret – *your appointment could be viewed as the 'old boys' network' in operation.*

These are examples only. Please remember that declaring a conflict does not necessarily preclude you from the appointment. You should consider carefully your own circumstances to gauge whether or not a real or perceived conflict might exist. The selection panel will discuss any potential conflicts of interest with you to ascertain their impact, if any, and discuss ways of alleviating their impact.

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