

Board Member Core Skills Framework – Public Appointments

Background

The Programme for Government, published in November 2014, sets out the commitment to achieve gender balance on public, private and third sector Boards by 2020. We established the Public Boards and Corporate Diversity Programme to drive this work; Strand 2 of the programme seeks to improve diversity in regulated Ministerial public appointments with an initial focus on gender balance. We have scoped out a range of activity to support this objective, from outreach programmes, to improved accessibility of forms, guidance and selection processes, to careful and inclusive definition of selection criteria.

Feedback from Ministers in a session in autumn 2014 with the Commissioner for Ethical Standards in Public Life in Scotland, Bill Thomson, and officials, was that broader diversity in terms of candidates recommended for appointments would be welcome; a shift away from the 'same old faces' that are often seen, thus improving diversity of thought and contribution to governance and decision making in the boardroom.

The principle of appointing on merit, as set out in the Commissioner's Code of Practice for regulated ministerial public appointments requires that where one candidate best meets the selection criteria as set out in the person specification, then only that candidate is recommended to Scottish Ministers for appointment, ensuring the integrity and transparency of the process. This highlights clearly the importance of Ministers defining what 'merit' means in any appointment round, as it is against that definition that candidates will be tested. When the 'most able' candidates are recommended, they will therefore meet the criteria that Ministers determined at the outset.

Setting criteria

Criteria should be set at the minimum number and level required to ensure effective performance as a board member, so as to encourage the maximum degree of diversity within the applicant pool. This is not to discourage Ministers from setting criteria at a demanding level but to ensure the appropriate level of skill is identified for the vacancy in question; and to highlight that it may not be essential that all appointments/board members need to demonstrate most of the skills that a board requires overall, at the highest level. Ministers should also consider defining 'priority' criteria, which should be weighted above the others, to ensure that the most able applicants who have the skills, knowledge, experience and other criteria that really matter to the board, are appointed. In practice, Ministers give broad direction to selection panels about the type of person that they wish to appoint. Selection panels then

define that more tightly in the form of a person specification, using this framework for guidance, to ensure that the right outcome is achieved.

What is the framework?

The framework includes many of the core generic skills/personal qualities which may be sought as part of public appointment rounds across the diverse range of bodies and organisations in Scotland – Ministers may want to select some of these, dependent upon the nature of the post to be filled. Each of the skills/qualities is defined at three different levels and includes descriptors of what applicants will be expected to demonstrate at each level – these are cumulative with each level building on the levels below. For example, if the desired level is set at level 3 then the applicant will be expected to demonstrate levels 1 and 2 as a matter of course. The panel should select the level which best describes the skills/personal qualities which are needed by the board and can adapt the descriptors – or add their own - in order to make them more specific and relevant. The skills and descriptors will form the basis of the information contained in the Person Specification (an example is provided in Appendix A). They should be provided to applicants to ensure they are fully aware of what they will need to demonstrate and used by the panel to evaluate the evidence provided at the different stages of assessment.

How will the framework help panels?

- saves time by providing descriptions of the most commonly used generic criteria
- enables clarity and consistency by developing a common understanding of what each skill actually means
- assists the panel in determining at what level the criteria should be met
- provides a strong basis for better quality assessment and fairer decision making
- enables more emphasis to be placed on defining priority criteria
- provides better understanding for the applicant on what they need to demonstrate and this allows for a more demonstrably fair and open appointments process

Developing the framework

This framework has been developed in partnership with the Commissioner for Ethical Standards in Public Life in Scotland. In keeping with the improvement methodology approach that underpins the work of the Public Boards and Corporate Diversity Programme, this framework will be tested, reviewed and revised to reflect the lessons learned during appointment rounds.

Skill/personal quality	Descriptors
<p>Priority Criteria – the criteria which are essential to the board at a given point in time. These should be weighted and priority given to those applicants who are most able to demonstrate them</p>	<p>Priority criteria may fall into the following categories:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Geographic – applicants must live or work in a specific area, there may be a need for the interests of specific communities to be represented on a board • Life experience – applicants who bring relevant first-hand life experience related to the work of the body. For example, homelessness, social exclusion, users of the services the body provides etc. • Community experience – applicants who have been actively engaging with others within a community context. For example, this may include members of community organisations, NHS community health forums, school governors, local charities/fund raisers etc. • Work related experience/skills – applicants with specific work related skills, knowledge or experience. This may include IT, HR, Finance, customer service, risk management etc. • Technical/academic knowledge – applicants who bring technical knowledge or expertise. This may include knowledge in science, archaeology and architecture or in languages such as Gaelic etc. • Skills which are relevant to board priorities at a specific point in time – this may include skills which are relevant to a new organisation being formed, major change, where there are specific challenges/issues which need to be addressed etc. • General skills which need to be demonstrated at a higher than usual level – the nature, size or impact of the body may mean that one of the more general skills needs to be demonstrated at a high level. <p><i>The panel will need to determine how the priority criteria are described and at what level</i></p>

<p>Longer term planning / seeing the bigger picture</p>	<p>Level 1 - core</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • see the 'bigger picture' when considering issues and topics, although may not have had any direct experience of developing strategy • understands the importance of having a plan/strategy and what it might include/involve • looks ahead and considers issues/topics within different timeframes • identifies some relevant implications from what is being discussed, such as challenges & risks • sees beyond their own personal experience and gives consideration to other information and views
	<p>Level 2 - enhanced</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • direct experience of contributing to the development of a strategy or business plan • identifies a comprehensive range of priorities, challenges and risks within different timeframes and can evaluate their impact from a strategic perspective • has a clear informed picture of the long term aim of the organisation when considering issues • sees whole picture rather than the part they may feel most qualified or experienced in
	<p>Level 3 - adept</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • direct experience in successfully formulating strategy at a senior level within an organisation • takes account of what is happening within a sector, across different geographical regions and is aware of any political implications • keeps abreast of developments which may be relevant to or affect the organisation/board and its ability to meet its objectives and reviews the implications from a strategic perspective
<p>Managing performance</p>	<p>Level 1 - core</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • an understanding of what the body/board are required to do and their responsibilities • an appreciation of the different roles and responsibilities of internal staff and non- executive board members • recognises the personal contribution they would be able to make to the success of the body/board
	<p>Level 2 - enhanced</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • experience of successfully managing the performance of a function or department in line with a defined plan • an understanding of the measures used to evaluate performance. • an understanding of quality assurance and continuous improvement. • experience of dealing effectively with poor performance.

	<p>Level 3 - adept</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • experience of successfully implementing a plan/strategy and being accountable for the performance of a large department/function or of a whole organisation • understands how performance/service delivery needs to be managed within a large department/function or organisation • evidence of improving the performance of a large department/function or of a whole organisation
<p>Change Management</p>	<p>Level 1 - core</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • personal experience of change - understanding something about how it should be implemented and the critical factors for success
	<p>Level 2 – enhanced</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • direct experience of successfully managing change • an understanding of what is required to support change • an understanding of why change might not work and be able to put forward ideas on how proposals could be revised to be successful
	<p>Level 3 – adept</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • direct responsibility for successfully implementing change within a large department/function or organisation • substantial involvement in defining successful change programmes or activities • an in depth understanding of why culture change might be important • experience of putting in place policies to support change
<p>Analysis & decision making</p>	<p>Level 1 - core</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • using information which is available to reach conclusions • able to explain how conclusions have been reached • identifying some of the implications associated with what they are considering – priorities, risks, opportunities etc. • recognising when information is limited and where more information might be needed • being able to balance a number of different considerations

	<p>Level 2 - enhanced</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • recognises the information which is needed to make the decision • sound evaluation of the information with a good range of conclusions being reached, which are clearly explained • comfortable working with both numerical and written data • making decisions which have had a positive impact at departmental, functional or organisational level • using 'hard' evidence as well as seeking the views of others • able to make decisions when the information available is complicated and made up of several components which have to be analysed and assessed and may contain conflicting information or indicators • thinking through the implications of decisions before coming to a final position <p>Level 3 - adept</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • understands the decision making process at a relatively senior level • comfortable in the analysis of highly complex information where critical/important decisions are being made • understands the wider strategic environment and takes account of this when making decisions • interrogates the information and recognises the impact/implications of different elements, taking account of this in the decisions which are made • accuracy and sound judgement in the decisions which are made • comfortable in making reasoned judgements where extensive evidence might not be available
<p>Constructive & supportive challenge</p>	<p>Level 1 - core</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • being confident in questioning proposals and debating issues. • putting forward their views in an objective way, not being too dogmatic about their own perspective. • helping others to consider their own position in a non-confrontational way. <p>Level 2 – enhanced</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • direct evidence of challenging effectively within a diverse team or committee situation. • evidence of where challenge has changed the views of others and influenced decisions without causing rancour or resentment. • questioning shows good level of understanding of organisational and other issues that have led people to form their views.

	<p>Level 3 – adept</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • evidence of successfully challenging the views of others within a senior management or board setting • able to demonstrate where the impact of their personal challenge on decisions has led to a positive change in the aims/objectives of organisation or within major policy areas • can evidence where an in-depth understanding of issues and others’ perspectives has enabled high level questioning of proposals
<p>Communication & influencing</p>	<p>Level 1 - core</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • being focussed and succinct in their communication • active listening – showing people that they are taking account of what is being said • Confident in expressing views and opinions in a group setting • satisfactory written skills, appropriate to the requirements of the role
	<p>Level 2 – enhanced</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • being persuasive, able to influence within a committee/meeting setting or perhaps other stakeholders • an understanding of the need for a flexible influencing style • being engaging & enthusiastic • Good written skills • able to adapt their style appropriately for different audiences
	<p>Level 3 – adept</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • evidence of effectively representing/ promoting the organisation to a wide range of stakeholders, including politicians and the media – being an ambassador • able to demonstrate where they have successfully influenced senior level colleagues and stakeholders • Highly persuasive within a senior group or in selling the objectives/benefits to a wide range of stakeholders • Confident & engenders respect in varied situations

<p>Working co-operatively & collaboratively</p>	<p>Level 1 - core</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • appreciating the knowledge/skills of colleagues • supporting colleagues whenever possible • sharing knowledge at every opportunity • showing respect for colleagues and stakeholders • striving to achieve consensus • able to accept a consensus decision even if it goes against a personal view
	<p>Level 2 – enhanced</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • working with colleagues to deliver objectives • actively seeks out the views of colleagues • showing enthusiasm in working with colleagues on a task which might not have direct benefit for their own role • prepared to take on a task or role for the ‘good of the organisation’ • seeking opportunities to build constructive relationships within the organisation
	<p>Level 3 – adept</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • working with different organisations and stakeholders to deliver objectives • building strong relationships with ‘partner’ organisations and works with them on an ‘equal’ basis • Influencing colleagues to help reach consensus • being non territorial – able to be objective and impartial in doing what is best for the organisation
<p>Leading the Board</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • provides clear focus in ensuring that the body/organisation achieves its objectives • successful in encouraging a group to work collaboratively together and to reach compromise and consensus • enables all group members to make an effective contribution • able to stand back, set aside personal views and listen objectively to others • appreciates the need to be challenged and to take account of alternative views in the decisions being taken • able to make difficult decisions • excellent communicating & influencing skills, able to inspire others and gain respect • committed to equality of opportunity and to developing and maintaining a diverse board

<p>Governance</p> <p><i>(as an alternative to including this criterion in the person specification, panels may want to combine/include some of the indicators with 'Managing Performance')</i></p>	<p>Level 1 - core</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • understands what governance is and be able to define this in very broad terms but no need for any direct experience • appreciate the board's role in ensuring effective governance <hr/> <p>Level 2 – enhanced</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • experience of fiscal/legal processes/procedures • experience of ensuring effective governance within the public or private sector or through involvement within a charity or as a member of a committee <hr/> <p>Level 3 – adept</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • direct experience of ensuring effective governance at senior management or board level • able to articulate what board responsibilities are from a fiscal and legal perspective and can demonstrate direct involvement in implementation of good governance principles • an understanding of audit and risk management and be able to demonstrate effective practical application of that understanding. • held a specific post related to governance
<p>Personal commitment</p>	<p>Some of the fit & proper person test. Demonstrating enthusiasm/interest in the body, having the time available, evidence of being prepared etc</p> <p>In most research it is considered important for a board member to be prepared and to give adequate time to the role – this could also be legitimately included. These are things that could be included in a 'presentation' or a personal statement in an application form. Some suggested descriptors are as follows:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • able to demonstrate interest and enthusiasm in the body/organisation and what it is striving to achieve • able to devote sufficient time to being a member of a group/team • being sufficiently organised and prepared to make an effective contribution to a group/team (much of the above can be tested via preparation for a practical exercise. If people, for example, don't complete any advance preparation suggested by the panel for an assessment exercise and this is clearly evident in their performance in the exercise then they will be deemed not to have demonstrated the required commitment.)

Appendix A (person specification which was discussed at Creative Scotland planning meeting – 160315)

This is an example of a person specification designed for an appointment round for Creative Scotland which demonstrates to panels how indicators can be changed/added to etc.

Person Specification

What skills, experience & personal qualities do we need new Creative Scotland board members to have?

It is important that we have people with a variety of different skills and experience which will enable the board to work effectively. All board members need to have some general skills and personal qualities which will enable them to make a full contribution to the work of the Board but these do not have to have been gained by working in a management post or at a senior level, you may just have a natural aptitude in these areas or you may have gained them through being active in your community, in a voluntary capacity or just through your own personal life experience – these are listed in the ‘General skills & personal qualities’ section and we have explained exactly what we will be looking for and how they will be tested.

Creative Scotland also needs people who bring some very specific skills/experience to the board and these will take priority during the appointment process – these are listed in the ‘Priority skills/experience’ section and, again, we have explained what we will be looking for and how they will be tested. It is very important that there is the right balance of skills on the board so the Minister will be taking account of which ‘priority’ skill each applicant is able to demonstrate when selecting applicants for appointment. It is also important that Creative Scotland has board members from all geographic regions in Scotland so this will also be a factor in the decisions which are made at all stages in the appointment process

There are several priority skill/experience areas listed but we will only be looking for you to demonstrate **one** of these. If you believe you can demonstrate more than one, then you will have the opportunity to tell us about this during the selection process

Priority skills/experience (you will only need to demonstrate **one** of these)

Experience/skill	What does this mean	How will this be tested
Knowledge/understanding of ethnic minority communities	You may belong to an ethnic minority or you may have gained knowledge/understanding by working closely with ethnic minority communities or groups	We will want you to tell us about your knowledge/understanding and how this has been gained in the written application. We will also be having a discussion with you about this during the interview
A practical knowledge & understanding of the Scottish arts, screen and/or creative industries sectors and how these work.	You have a day to day involvement within at least one of the creative sectors and will also understand how Scottish arts can progress internationally.	We will want you to tell us about your knowledge/understanding and how this has been gained in the written application. We will also be having a discussion with you about this during the interview
Financial experience	We need a person who has experience of working in finance, audit or risk, who would be able to offer advice to the Board and also participate in either the Audit or Finance and General Policy Committees. It would be an advantage if you had a formal qualification in Finance	We will want you to tell us about your experience and how this has been gained in the written application. We will also be having a discussion with you about this during the interview

General skills & personal qualities (we will want all applicants to demonstrate these)

Skill/quality	What does this mean?	How will this be tested?
Working collaboratively & constructively with others	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • appreciating the knowledge/skills of colleagues • supporting colleagues whenever possible • sharing knowledge at every opportunity • showing respect for colleagues and stakeholders • striving to achieve consensus • able to accept a consensus decision even if it 	During the interview we will ask you to give us some practical examples of situations where you have worked collaboratively and constructively with others. This may have been in employment, through working in the community or in a voluntary capacity

	<p>goes against a personal view</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • being confident in questioning proposals and debating issues. • putting forward your views in an objective way • not being too dogmatic about your own perspective. • helping others to consider their own position in a non-confrontational way 	<p>We will assess this by asking you to complete a practical exercise, as part of the interview, which will allow you to demonstrate this skill. We will also have a follow up discussion which will enable us to ask some further questions</p>
<p>Challenging the views of others in a constructive and supportive way</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • able to look ahead and consider issues/topics within different timeframes • identifying relevant implications from what is being discussed such as challenges, risks etc. • seeing beyond your own personal experience or specialism and considering other information and perspectives • does not take a short term, parochial view • it is not necessary to have experience of developing or implementing a strategy 	<p>We will assess this by asking you to complete a practical exercise, as part of the interview, which will allow you to demonstrate this skill. We will also have a follow up discussion which will enable us to ask some further questions</p>
<p>Seeing the 'bigger picture'</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • using information which is available to reach conclusions • clearly explain how conclusions have been reached • identifying some of the implications associated with what you are considering – priorities, risks, opportunities etc. • recognising when information is limited and where more information might be needed • being able to balance a number of different considerations 	<p>We will assess this by asking you to complete a practical exercise, as part of the interview, which will allow you to demonstrate this skill. We will also have a follow up discussion which will enable us to ask some further questions</p>
<p>Analysing information and making decisions</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • an understanding of what Creative Scotland and the board are required to do • able to explain the different responsibilities of 	<p>During the interview we will ask you some questions about your knowledge and understanding of what Creative Scotland does and the role & responsibilities of executive staff</p>
<p>Managing performance</p>		

	<p>executive staff and board members</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • an appreciation of the board’s responsibility for ensuring effective governance • personal experience of change with an understanding of how it should be implemented and the critical factors for success 	<p>and the board – you do not need any specific experience to answer these questions but you will need to do some background research before the interview. We will want you to tell us about your own personal experience of ‘change’</p>
Communicating effectively	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • being focussed and succinct in your communication with good listening skills • confident in expressing views and opinions in a group setting • persuasive, able to influence others to your own perspective • able to adapt your style appropriately for different situations • satisfactory written skills 	<p>We will assess your written skills from the completion of your written application. We will assess your verbal skills through your responses to the practical exercise and the interview.</p>
Enthusiastic and passionate about arts & culture in Scotland	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • knowledge/understanding of arts and culture in Scotland and the role of Creative Scotland • regularly attend arts/cultural events • able to explain how the arts/culture have benefited yourself and how they can benefit the wider community • can enthuse others about the arts/culture 	<p>We will want you to tell us about your personal interest in and enthusiasm for arts/culture in the written application. We will also have a discussion with you about this during the interview, as well as assessing your knowledge/understanding of arts/culture in Scotland and the role of Creative Scotland</p>