



Commission for Public Service  
Appointments

# Strategy Statement 2011 - 2013

<b>Mission</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>Message from the Commission</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>Environmental Context</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>Values, Vision and Functions</b>	<b>8</b>
<b>Strategic Objectives and Outcomes</b>	<b>9</b>
<b>Key Performance Indicators</b>	<b>11</b>

## **Mission**

Our mission is to safeguard the integrity of the recruitment, selection and appointment of people to publicly funded positions and, by continually improving standards, to engender widespread confidence in the ability of those appointed to contribute to the delivery of public services.

## **Message from the Commission**

We, the members of the Commission for Public Service Appointments, are delighted to present the Commission's third Statement of Strategy to the Minister for Finance, Brian Lenihan, TD. The Statement sets out the Commission's strategic intent for the next three years.

The Statement builds upon the successes of the past six years and lays the foundations for the Commission's work for the period 2011 to 2013. We are confident that it provides a robust basis on which the Commission can develop work plans and programmes that ensure the highest standards of probity and merit in all appointment processes in each of the organisations under the Commission's remit.

As always, the Commission aims to ensure that public sector organisations apply the highest standards of integrity and probity for all appointments; that they remain impartial, objective and consistent in their treatment of candidates; that their selection processes are operated openly and transparently; and that rigorous best-practice methodologies are employed so that the best candidates are recruited and selected.

This Statement of Strategy will inform the development of annual business plans which will reflect the Commission's different areas of responsibility, including those of the supporting Office of the Commission for Public Service Appointments. We believe that this Statement of Strategy provides the Commission with clarity and focus to meet the challenges ahead. It will form the basis for a continued and improving service to all stakeholders and will greatly assist the Commission in its independent regulatory role.

## Environmental Context

The Commission for Public Service Appointments was established in October 2004 under the Public Service Management (Recruitment and Appointments) Act 2004. The Commission is a regulatory body whose function is to set and monitor standards of probity, merit, equity and fairness to govern the recruitment and selection of persons for appointment to positions in the Civil Service, An Garda Síochána, the Health Service Executive (HSE), the Health Information and Quality Authority (HIQA), and to certain managerial, professional and technical positions in the Local Authorities and Vocational Education Committees.

The Commission is happy that its Codes of Practice and the principles set out therein have gained considerable credibility across the Public Service. There has also been a heightened recognition of provisions of the 2004 Act and the obligations it places on Offices and Departments. The Commission is pleased to note that many organisations have complemented their commitment to a public service ethos, and the accompanying recognition of the values of probity, openness and transparency, with a willingness to ensure that the Codes are properly understood and applied to internal as well as external appointment processes. Public sector recruiters increasingly accept the premise that meeting the standards set out in the Codes offers the best form of protection against suspicions of impropriety by those who, quite understandably, demand that the highest standards are applied to public appointments. Recruiters have been increasingly willing to engage with the Commission and to actively seek guidance on procedural matters before initiating an appointment process.

In recent years public confidence in many institutions has been shaken, as many questions have been asked about the performance of these institutions. In addition to responses to the rapidly changing economic circumstances and rising customer expectations, well-documented weaknesses in governance have understandably shaken beliefs and assumptions with regard to probity. In light of the many recent public tribulations it is timely to restate the Commission's *raison d'être*, which is to safeguard, reinforce and embed the principles of probity, merit, equity and fairness with regard to public service appointments.

This presents challenges to the Commission on two levels. Firstly, the Commission must work hard to ensure appointments systems operated by public sector recruiters are above reproach. Secondly, the Commission must be certain that its own procedures are fit for purpose and are applied rigorously. The business plans adopted by the Commission in support of this Strategy Statement will need to establish a programme of

engagement with public sector bodies and also a review of its own procedures.

While current economic difficulties are likely to result in far fewer appointments than heretofore, it is vitally important that the Irish public has faith and confidence in the impartiality and objectivity of decisions arrived at throughout public service appointments processes.

The 2008 Report of the Taskforce on the Public Service, *Transforming Public Services; Citizen centred – Performance focused*, states that ‘higher levels of service delivery and performance are achieved as staff are incentivised and motivated by merit based promotion and the most appropriate person is encouraged and supported to move into a position that best meets their capability and the organisation’s needs’ (p. 29). This very much fits in with the Commission’s own mission. Indeed, the Commission is heartened that it is increasingly perceived by public service bodies as an agent for the sort of changes they are anxious to bring about themselves in terms of incentivising and rewarding good performance through career development and succession planning.

The Commission believes that it has a significant role to play in underpinning confidence in the system of appointments as a way of engendering trust in those appointed to fill these positions. The systems through which individuals are appointed to positions in public bodies have a key role to play, not just in recruiting and selecting the most competent candidates, but also in building trust and confidence in the institutions of the state.

The standards for recruitment established by the Commission are publicly available in its Codes of Practice. The Commission’s key focus is on ensuring that high-quality and effective recruitment and selection practices, consistent with current best practice, are observed by all those involved so that the best people are appointed on merit. As with other regulatory bodies, the Commission is mindful of commentary on, and criticisms of, regulatory regimes and in particular the principles-based regulation system widely in practice. The Commission considers that the principles it has set out in its Code of Practice afford sufficient safeguards while at the same time providing Offices and Departments with the flexibility they require to meet their own challenging and changing environments. While the values espoused in the Codes are enduring, the Commission appreciates that it must continually review not just how the principles are defined but also how they are monitored. For instance, the Commission has noted with some disappointment that there have been some recurring failings by recruiters in their application of some aspects of the principles set out in the Codes of Practice and that it must consider how it can reinforce the need for greater vigilance against these shortcomings by recruiters.

The recruitment environment has undergone significant transformation in recent years and the Commission acknowledges the challenges and opportunities that the extent of such modernisation present. A notable change over the last few years has been the recruitment moratorium and the pressures that this has placed on public sector organisations. The Commission anticipates that this will present new challenges to recruitment functions as the approval process for filling vacancies is extended and experienced recruitment staff are redeployed. In time, when recruitment restrictions are loosened, the requirement to address skills shortages may test the capacity to respond to changing needs.

Throughout this period of change, the Commission, through effective regulation, will play a lead role in safeguarding standards of best practice in appointments to positions in the bodies subject to its remit. It will endeavour to work with Offices and Departments to ensure that the reputation of their recruitment function is a beacon of probity and best practice.

The key performance indicators by which the Commission's achievements can be measured are outlined in this Strategy Statement. The Commission's annual report for each of the years encompassed by this Statement will set out the Commission's performance and delivery in these areas.

## **Values**

In fulfilling our mission we subscribe to core public sector values, as follows:

- probity and integrity
- commitment to merit-based appointments
- fairness, consistency, objectivity and impartiality in selection
- adherence to best practice
- openness and transparency.

## **Vision**

That those selected to public service positions have the skills, talent and attributes necessary to meet and exceed the challenges of their role.

## **Functions**

The functions of the Commission are to:

- establish standards of probity, merit, equity and fairness, and other principles as it considers appropriate, to be followed, in the public interest, in the recruitment and selection of persons for positions in the Civil Service and other public service bodies.
- publish the standards established as Codes of Practice.
- audit and evaluate recruitment policies and practices to safeguard the standards and to establish whether the Codes of Practice are being observed.
- grant recruitment licences, amending and revoking same where necessary.
- issue instructions and advice to licence holders.
- establish and set down appropriate appeal procedures to address candidates' complaints and grievances.
- report to both the Oireachtas and the Government, and provide information to ministers on the operation of recruitment and selection processes.
- meet on a regular basis, and agree and establish procedures which it deems appropriate and which permit it to decide upon and carry out its functions effectively.



## Strategic Objectives

- 1 To actively and continually improve recruitment and selection standards across the Public Service.
- 2 To promote the Commission's role and mandate.
- 3 To review the methods through which the Commission carries out its functions.
- 4 To expand its remit to broaden the range of appointments.

## Outcomes

The outcomes relating to each of the Commission's objectives include results, achievements in the immediate and short term, and impacts which reflect proposed achievements over a longer-term perspective.

- 1 Actively and continually improve recruitment and selection standards across the Public Service.
  - Tailored recruitment and selection practices aimed at recruiting the best possible candidates for positions in public sector bodies under the Commission's remit.
  - A culture of continuous review and desire for improvement with a focus on delivering candidates capable of meeting and exceeding expectations.
  - Commitment to appropriate training for all those involved in recruitment.
  - Recruiters' willingness to pool their expertise and adopt best practice as applied elsewhere.
- 2 Promote the Commission's role and mandate.
  - Client bodies are aware of, and understand, the role of the Commission.
  - Client bodies carry out external and internal recruitment in line with established standards.
  - Candidates are aware of the principles of the Codes.
- 3 Review the methods through which the Commission carries out its functions.
  - Focused and fit-for-purpose audit and complaint investigations.
  - Codes of Practice reviewed so that they remain valid, understood and may be assiduously adhered to.

- Proactive engagement with stakeholders.
  - Optimum deployment of available resources.
  - Offices and Departments' commitment to and acceptance of responsibility for implementing the Codes.
  - High standards of monitoring and evaluation of recruitment and selection.
  - Minimal breaches of the Codes, as evidenced in audits or reviews.
- 4 Expand its remit to broaden the range of appointments.
- The majority of appointments to the Local Authorities within the Commission's remit, along with positions in HSE-funded voluntary agencies, and education and non-commercial state-sponsored bodies.

## Key Performance Indicators

- a High level of compliance with the principles of the Codes, as observed in the Commission's audits and investigations.
- b Process improvement, and tailored and timely delivery of training to recruitment practitioners as the norm in all offices/departments.
- c Recruiters benchmark performance against best-practice models.
- d Early adoption of Commission's recommendations by offices/departments.
- e Identified shortcomings acknowledged and addressed by offices and departments and the non-recurrence of errors.
- f Regular and effective engagement with office holders and other stakeholders.
- g Expansion of the Commission's remit.
- h Successful management of candidates' expectations by Office Holders and the Commission alike.
- i Codes of Practice are valid, understood and applied.