

Public Appointments – Board Member Core Skills Framework

What is the framework?

The framework is a tool that helps selection panels to clearly define what is sought on a body's board at a given point in time. It facilitates the production of a person specification which contains clear and unambiguous criteria for selection and a set of transparent descriptors that articulate what evidence that meets the criteria will look like. It also helps panels to match the criteria for selection to appropriate methods of assessment. A person specification designed in this way ensures that selection panels and just as importantly applicants have a shared understanding of exactly what the board's needs are and exactly how people will be assessed to see if they meet the board's needs. The framework is set out in two sections. The first section describes "priority" criteria for selection that tend to be very specific to a board's particular needs at a particular point in time. The second section describes and includes indicators for more generic criteria that tend to be common to many board positions such as communication skills.

Priority Criteria

Priority criteria are the criteria which are essential to the board at a given point in time. They may fall into the following categories:

- 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.

Generic criteria

The framework includes many of the generic skills/personal qualities and other attributes which may be sought when open competitions are held to find new board members across the diverse range of bodies and organisations in Scotland. Each of the skills / qualities and attributes, also called criteria for selection, are defined at three different levels:

- Core
- Enhanced
- Adept

For example: Change Management

Level 1 – core

- personal experience of change - understanding something about how it should be implemented and the critical factors for success

Level 2 – enhanced

- 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

Level 3 – adept

- 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

The criteria for selection and descriptors will form the basis of the information contained in the Person Specification (an example person specification is provided on pages 3-6).

The core skills/qualities listed in the framework are:

- Longer term planning / seeing the bigger picture
- Managing performance
- Change Management
- Analysis & decision making
- Constructive & supportive challenge
- Communication & influencing
- Working co-operatively & collaboratively
- Leading the Board
- Governance
- Personal commitment

Public Appointments: Example Person Specification

This is an example of the new style person specification developed by the Public Appointments Team and Commissioner for Ethical Standards in Public Life in Scotland. This partnership working seeks to support public bodies to be effective and reflective of society through practical change to the regulated ministerial public appointments process.

This person specification has been adapted from one used for a Creative Scotland members appointment round. That round saw the achievement of a gender balanced board for the body and was considered a milestone.

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.

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 have first-hand knowledge/understanding gained through belonging to an ethnic minority community 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. A formal qualification in finance is not essential but it is considered desirable in relation to this particular criterion.	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

	goes against a personal view	
Challenging the views of others in a constructive and supportive way	<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 	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
Seeing the 'bigger picture'	<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 	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
Analysing information and making decisions	<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 	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
Managing performance	<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 executive staff and board members 	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

	<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 	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’
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 	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.
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 	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