

A guide to State Boards

Part of IoD Ireland's Director Development Toolkit

Introduction

The State Boards appointment process is documented on **stateboards.ie**. This guide to State Boards is prepared based on the information available on that website and from Institute of Directors Ireland members' experience. It should not be taken as an official statement of the State Board policy and has not been compiled by a government organisation. It should only be seen as a guide.

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About State Boards

State Boards is part of publicjobs, the centralised provider of recruitment, assessment and selection services for the Civil Service (18 Government Departments), Local Authorities, the Health Service Executive, An Garda Síochána and 150+ public bodies.

The process to identify qualified candidates is open and transparent. Their role is to deliver high-quality governance and accountability through the appointment of diverse, talented, and committed board members who reflect the diversity of society.

State Boards work with Government Departments; commercial, non-commercial, and regulatory entities that are public sector bodies of the State and have a statutory obligation to perform specific tasks on behalf of the Government of Ireland. Whilst they come under the aegis of Government Departments, they are distinct and separate from the civil service and deliver crucial services to the Irish public, providing vital services that help influence and shape Irish society. Serving on the board of a State Agency offers you the unique opportunity to play a role in the strategic planning and direction of the agency to the benefit of the public it serves.

State Boards can be categorised as follows:

- Large Commercial Entities e.g. An Post, ESB Group, DAA plc
- Non-Commercial Entities e.g. Enterprise Ireland, IDA Ireland
- Regulated Entities e.g. The Health Information and Quality Authority (HIQA), The Pharmaceutical Society of Ireland (PSI — the Pharmacy Regulator)
- Other Public Bodies E.g. Voluntary Bodies, Health sector.

Click **here** to view a list of all State Boards by government department. This will give you **visibility** of the types of opportunities that exist on State Boards and help you consider which ones may match your experience and skillset.

You can sign up to receive alerts via the publicjobs website when new vacancies are advertised.

<https://www.publicjobs.ie/candidateportal/login/register.do>

Role of a State Board member

Members of State Boards are appointed to act on behalf of citizens to oversee the running of the affairs of State bodies.

State bodies must serve the interests of the taxpayer, pursue value for money in their endeavours (including managing risk appropriately), and act transparently as public entities. Members of State Boards, and the relevant management team, are accountable for the proper management of the organisation.

Board members should act on a fully informed basis, in good faith, with due diligence and care, and in the best interest of the State body, subject to the objectives set by Government.

The Code of Practice for the Governance of State Bodies 2016 provides a framework for the application of best practice in corporate governance by both commercial and non-commercial State bodies.

In order to be an effective contributor on a State Board, it is recommended that members should:

- Bring independent and objective scrutiny to the oversight of the organisation
- Be prepared to be challenging when necessary while being supportive to the delivery of organisational strategy and objectives
- Be equipped to offer considered advice on the basis of sound judgement and experience
- Be prepared to make a time commitment to their work commensurate with their role.

A public appointment is a great opportunity to give something back and contribute your expertise to society and influence key decisions. State Boards are ideal platforms to develop your board career and gain invaluable board experience.

What's involved and what are they looking for?

On average there are 9-10 board meetings per year plus sub committees. The time commitment and committee requirement is clearly indicated in the information booklet for each role.

Joining a State Board is a commitment of your time attending board meetings and committee meetings as appropriate as well as the time involved in preparing for meetings.

Some State Board roles are unpaid. Those that are paid range from €3k–€15k annually depending on the size of the organisation. The remuneration for Chair roles is slightly higher. It should be noted that in line with the 'One Person One Salary' principle, no public servant will be entitled to receive remuneration in the form of board fees, save for situations that are statutorily provided for e.g., Worker Directors.

Board meetings generally take place in the headquarters of the organisation which can be located anywhere in Ireland.

As well as the criteria clearly laid out in the candidate information booklet State Boards are looking for a diverse range of candidates to appoint to State Boards reflecting the diversity of the population of Ireland — gender, race and ethnicity, age, cultural, sexual orientation, socio-economic, disability and cognitive diversity.

Prior board experience is not always necessary. Specific competencies that have been in demand on State Boards recently include:

- Finance & Audit
- Sustainability
- Innovation — Technology & Strategic
- Customer focus
- Leadership
- Cyber Security.

Take a look at the guide on **Skills you need to succeed** for more help.

Board opportunities

State Boards advertise over 300 board vacancies per year and appoint over 200 people to over 70 boards per annum.

State Board roles are advertised openly and transparently on the [publicjobs website](#) with an information booklet for each vacancy. The information booklet provides information pertaining to the role such as:

- Person specification indicating essential and desirable skills and experience required
- Background to the State Board including strategic direction
- Role of the board
- Location of board meetings
- Term of the appointment (varies from 3-5 year terms)
- Time commitment
- Remuneration (if applicable)
- Current board composition
- Overview of the appointment process
- Closing date for applications.

Application and assessment process

The application process for State Boards is slightly different to a regular board role application process.

Applications are made via the publicjobs website. If it's your first time applying for a State Board role you will need to create an account on publicjobs.ie. Once you have done this you can access the application link for the specific role. This will allow you to upload your CV and cover letter as well as respond to any supplementary questions that are included as part of the application process.

Your cover letter is very important when applying for State Board roles and the assessment panel will give great consideration to the contents of the cover letter. Take a look at the guide on [How to write a cover letter](#) for more help. In the cover letter you should:

- Demonstrate how you meet the essential criteria required
- Explain why you are interested in joining this board
- Show your vision for what you would contribute if you were successful in your application
- State that no conflicts of interest exist or confirm how you would resolve conflicts of interest or perception of conflicts of interest.

Prior to applying for a role make sure to review the person specification to determine if you are a suitable applicant. The assessment panel will only assess on the basis of the person specification they have been given for the role therefore if you do not meet all of the essential criteria and some of the desirable criteria your application will not be successful.

Ensure you have addressed each of the essential criteria and as many of the desirable criteria as possible in both your cover letter and CV. The cover letter for a State Board role will typically be much longer than that of a non-State Board role as it's key you address all of the criteria required.

An assessment panel is established for each appointment.

The assessment panel will have an independent Chairperson, a Department nominee, Chairperson of the board and an expert panel member from private sector or public sector. If the role relates to NewEra, they will have a member on the panel who will chair the panel. The panel will meet and look at all the applications for the role. The panel are not permitted to look at any information about you other than your specific application therefore its essential you include all relevant information you would like them to consider about you.

The final stage

A meeting may or may not take place with the candidate.

If a meeting takes place, it is generally quite short, approx. 20-30 minutes. The interview will also check you are aware of the time commitment involved and discuss any conflicts of interest. Following the assessment process an average of 3-5 names are proposed to the Minister for final selection and subsequent appointment. Once the list of proposed candidates is shared with the Minister the decision can take anywhere from a number of weeks to 3 months for an appointment to be made.

Prior to appointment the Department will contact you, if you are the successful candidate, to ensure you are still interested and willing to be appointed to the board. Once confirmed, they will notify the State Boards team.

If you are not successful you will hear from State Boards once the final decision is made and an opportunity to receive feedback will be provided, should you wish. If you are not successful on this occasion your name is retained by the Department for 12 months should another vacancy arise on the same board. At that point the Minister revisits the list to appoint another board member.

Useful Documents

- **The non-executive director career guide**
- **Skills you need to succeed**
- **How to write a board CV**
- **How to write a board cover letter**
- **Interview questions workbook.**



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