

FOI DOF/2023-0092

Request

Pursuant to the response to DOF/2023-0057 (Details of the current vacancies by grade in the NICS), and having noted that there are a number of vacancies at all grade across the NICS, I would like to request the following information under the Freedom of Information Act;

1. The current total number of permanent Staff Officer vacancies, by Department, and also the total number of permanent Staff Officer vacancies across the NICS.
2. Of the total at question 1, how many how many of these permanent Staff Officer vacancies have had a funding and headcount form submitted?
3. How many permanent Staff Officer posts are currently filled by way of temporary promotion?
4. How many permanent Staff Officer posts that are currently filled by temporary promotion are actually permanent and not to cover maternity leave, special exercises, and long term sickness?
5. How many permanent Staff Officer posts are currently vacant and not filled by temporary promotion?
6. How many substantive Staff Officers have retired since April 2022?
7. How many substantive Staff Officers will reach retirement age from March 2023 to March 2024?
8. How many candidates are deemed to be considered suitable for appointment from competition reference IRC275969?
9. Of the answer to question 7 above, how many of these have been offered an appointment?
10. When is it anticipated that the NICS will be making offers of appointment from competition reference IRC275969 to the next tranche of candidates who have been deemed suitable for appointment?
11. Of the answer to question 9 above, what is the expected number of offers of appointment?
12. How many additional Staff Officer vacancies are anticipated from the period March 23 to March 24?
13. What is the planned closing date of competition reference IRC275969?

DoF Response

I can confirm the department holds some of the information requested.

1. Details of the total vacancies in each department is not held centrally by Department of Finance. Each Civil Service Department is responsible for managing its resources – both financial and staff. Each department

determines its individual workforce needs and is responsible for ensuring that any additional staffing resources are affordable.

When a Department identifies a vacancy it needs filled, the request is referred to NICSHR to initiate the process to fill the post. NICSHR liaises with all Departments on an ongoing basis to seek to prioritise recruitment activity within allocated financial and staff resources.

As at the end of February 2023, NICSHR was managing a caseload of 227 General Service Staff Officer vacancies and 201 Non General Service vacancies. The table below provides the number of vacancies in each Department and the NICS total.

| Staff Officer Vacancies | DAERA | DE | DfC | DfE | DfI | DoF | DOJ | PPS | TEO | Total |
|--------------------------------|--------------|-----------|------------|------------|------------|------------|------------|------------|------------|--------------|
| General Service | 59 | 11 | 65 | 19 | 19 | 28 | 20 | 0 | 6 | 227 |
| Non General Service | 96 | 4 | 8 | 11 | 20 | 36 | 21 | 2 | 3 | 201 |
| Total | 155 | 15 | 73 | 30 | 39 | 64 | 41 | 2 | 9 | 428 |

- All of the Staff Officer vacancies identified in Question 1 had a Funding and Headcount form submitted.
- The number of temporary promotions to Staff Officer and analogous grades at end February 2023 is set out in the table below.

| | |
|---------------------|------------|
| General Service | 293 |
| Non General Service | 128 |
| Total | 421 |

Source: HRConnect

- The number of temporary promotions to Staff Officer and analogous grades which have a reason of vacant post, as selected by managers, at end February 2023 is set out in the table below.

| | |
|---------------------|------------|
| General Service | 109 |
| Non General Service | 56 |
| Total | 165 |

Source: HRConnect

- The Department of Finance does not centrally hold the Civil Service staff establishment information to determine the total number of Staff Officer posts, rather each Civil Service department is responsible for managing its resources – both financial and staff. Each department determines its individual workforce needs and is responsible for ensuring that any additional staffing resources are affordable. As a consequence, the total number of Staff Officer posts is not held by NICSHR, and therefore it is not possible to determine the total number of vacant posts where a temporary promotion arrangement is not in place. The number of temporary promotions held centrally by NICSHR is set out in Question 3 above.

6. The number of Staff Officers and analogous grades who retired since April 2022 is set out in the table below.

| | |
|---------------------|----|
| General Service | 44 |
| Non General Service | 17 |
| Total | 61 |

Source: HRConnect

7. The NICS removed the default retirement age in 2008 which means that staff can choose the age at which they retire, from their minimum pension age onwards. It not therefore possible to provide the number of substantive Staff Officers who will reach retirement age from March 2023 to March 2024.
8. Competition IRC275969 is a live competition to fill General Service vacancies over its lifetime. As at end February 2023, 589 successful candidates have reached merit list.
9. Please note, we have interpreted that your request relates to question 8, not question 7. As at 10 March 2023, 338 candidates have been offered appointments.
10. There is no anticipated date for when the NICS will be making offers of appointment from competition reference IRC275969.
11. As at the end of February 2023, of the 428 declared vacancies referred to at Question 1 above, there were 170 vacancies at General Service Staff Officer grade that may be filled from competition IRC275969.
12. NICS HR does not hold information relating to anticipated vacancies; each Civil Service Department is responsible for determining its individual workforce needs and when Departments identify vacancies to be filled, requests are referred to NICSHR to initiate the process to fill the posts.
13. Appointments will not be made from this competition after 19 August 2024, unless there are cogent practical reasons for extending the lifetime of the competition.