

Getting onto Public Bodies

presented by
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UK Resource Centre for Women in SET

Today's session

- The UKRC
- Elaine McNaughton - Office of the Commissioner for Public Appointments
- Sian Harding, member Medical Research Council, Populations, Systems and Medicine Board.
- Question and answer session

The UKRC's aims

“to improve the position and the participation of women in science, engineering, technology and the built environment”

The background and the agenda

- Women are gaining public body appointments, but progress is slow.
- Government committed to working towards better gender equality in NDPB's, and BIS working with UKRC on SET related public bodies.
- Latest figures at 2008 24% female participation
- Government target is for 40% female representation on NDPB's.

What the UKRC's interest is in public bodies

- Want to increase the supply of women applying for public appointments
- Supporting women to ensure that they feel better positioned to apply



How the UKRC can help

- Mentoring
- Seminars
- SET Board vacancies
- Good practice guides
- GetSETWomen

Elaine McNaughton

Office of the Commissioner for Public
Appointments

Sian Harding

Member Medical Research Council,
Populations, Systems and Medicine
Board.



The Role of Public Bodies and the Importance of Gender Diversity

Elaine McNaughton
Office of the Commissioner for Public
Appointments

W-Tech seminar 24 June 2009



Presentation outline

- Public appointments
- Public bodies and what they do
- Role of Commissioner for Public Appointments
- Importance of diversity
- Competences/skills needed to serve on a public body
- What's in it for you/your employer
- Useful tips – e.g. how to apply



What are “Public Appointments”?

- Senior non-executive appointments made by a Government Minister
- To the board of a “non-departmental public body” (NDPB)/ (QUANGO)
- But not judicial or similar appointments.



Size and Range of Ministerial Public Appointments in the UK

- Of 30,000 Ministerial appointments in the UK, a third fall within Commissioner's remit.
- Cover all walks of life – spend vast amount of tax payers' money!
- Separate Commissioners for Northern Ireland and Scotland.
- Majority of appointments are unpaid and part-time.



Public Bodies

- Executive NDPBs
- Advisory NDPBs
- Public Corporations
- Utility Regulators (Electricity, Gas, Telecommunications, Water)
- National Health Service bodies



Role of Commissioner for Public Appointments

- To regulate (Code of Practice)
- To monitor (Statistics)
- To promote equality of opportunity and diversity
- To report on appointment processes
- Not to make the appointments (but IPAAAs)



Diversity: Board Members: UK 2007/08

	Total	Women	Ethnic Minorities	Disabled people
Chairs	249	23%	2%	3.2%
Members	2,372	33.6%	9.2%	5%
Total	2,621	32.6%	8.4%	4.6%



Why is Diversity Important?

- Greater creativity
- More inclusive and enhanced decision-making
- Greater responsiveness and understanding of stakeholders and communities
- Improved overall performance in the public interest



What you need to serve on a public body

- The skills/competencies needed vary from body to body
- They also depend on the role

For example

Core competencies

Chair of a National Public Body

- Ability to communicate effectively
- Commitment
- Team leadership
- Sound judgement
- Knowledge of and interest in the body's subject matter

Continued

Core competencies (Chair) cont

- Strategic thinking capability
- Ability to negotiate
- Influencing skills
- Public speaking skills



Core Competencies of a Board Member of a small public body

- Ability to think originally
- Ability to give a balanced view
- Ability to keep an open mind and offer dispassionate advice
- Appreciation of working within public sector
- Ability to make an effective contribution to the work of the body
- Commitment to the aims of the body

What's in it for me?

- You get to make a difference
- You can use and pass on your specialist skills
- You can enhance your skills and abilities in:
 - Interpreting and communicating information;
 - Challenging constructively;
 - Seeing the wider perspective;
 - Thinking strategically; and
 - Team working.

What's in it for my employer?

They get a colleague with enhanced core, practical and personal skills and knowledge who can share their experience of public service and the mechanism of government.

Useful tips

- Highly competitive – keep on trying; request feedback
- Get other board experience first
- Be patient – process can take several months
- Provide evidence of your suitability in application forms
- Think through conflicts of interest

How do I find out more?

- WWW.publicappts-vacs.gov.uk
- Departmental websites
- Register interest with a department
- National news papers e.g. Sunday Times
- www.publicappointmentscommissioner.org

Public board membership

Prof Sian Harding
Imperial College London

The Mentoring for Public Life Scheme

- Already on Nuffield Bioethics Council by a circuitous route
- Aims for the Mentoring scheme – find out about other Boards
- Joined Mentoring scheme
 - Explanatory day
 - Mentor - Carol Dezateux –MRC Training Board
 - 2 months, 3 meetings, phone calls
 - Joined a Board meeting

Association of Women Academics of Imperial College

- Seminar series which I run
- Invited Rachel Tobbell to present the Mentoring Scheme
- Taken by Divisional women's reps to Principal
- Adopted as part of Athena Programme
- Aim - to get more Imperial women onto Research Councils
- I was nominated for MRC PSMB
- 53 applicants. My USP
 - Board experience and cardiovascular
 - **NOT** MRC grants and Nature papers!

MRC Populations, Systems and Medicine Board

- Estimate 20 days work per year
- Triage, 80 grants, 10 assigned
- Board meeting 2 days
 - Review 3-10 as 1st or 2nd Designated Board Member, collate referees opinions, summarise and describe
 - Join discussion on others
 - £150 per day plus expenses
- Other tasks, site visits, Retreat 2 days