NATIONAL LIBRARY OF IRELAND

Human Resources Strategy
2009–2011

NATIONAL LIBRARY of IRELAND | LEABHARLANN NÁISIÚNTA na hÉIREANN

Human Resources Strategy 2009–2011

CONTENTS

Director's Foreword	3
Strategic Goals of Human Resources Strategy	4
Background and Introduction	5
1. Recruitment, Selection and Promotion	7
2. Performance Management	8
3. Training and Employee Development	9
4. Mobility and Succession Planning	10
5. Culture, Equity and Communications	11
Performance Monitoring and Impact Assessment	12

National Library of Ireland
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Foreword

The National Library, in its *Strategic Plan 2008-2010*, set itself very ambitious targets aimed at ensuring that it becomes a high quality library operating at the forefront of technological change.

The current operating environment for the National Library and for the public sector generally, is a challenging one. The demands on the organisation and the expectations placed on it are high: the burden of delivering on these expectations will fall on the Library's staff.

Achievement of the organisation's strategic goals will not be easy: it is essential therefore that the Library has the right people with the appropriate skill sets in the proper positions. The Human Resources Strategy set out in this document charts the way forward in terms of meeting those particular requirements. The Strategy identifies five broad areas that require action: these are detailed in the document and specific actions are identified in each area.

Implementation of the Human Resources Strategy will not be easy particularly at a time of uncertainty in regard to the public finances. However, that uncertainty makes it even more important that work commences on the implementation of the Strategy so as to ensure that the Library is in a position to adapt itself to meet the challenges that lie ahead.

The Strategy has been prepared on a partnership basis and following an internal consultation process involving management, staff and unions. I look forward to working in partnership with all Library staff in achieving the various agreed and mutually beneficial objectives. In achieving these objectives, we will be contributing to the future effectiveness, success and development of the Library and of individual Library employees. Furthermore, I expect that our shared endeavours will make a significant contribution towards the promotion and delivery of customer service excellence.

It is a very important document and I commend it to staff.

Aongus Ó hAonghusa
Director

The overall objective of the Human Resources Strategy is to support the delivery of the Library's mission and aims as set out in its *Strategic Plan 2008-2010*.

Strategic Goals of the Human Resources Strategy

1. Improve and enhance the quality, suitability, equity and predictability of the Library's recruitment, selection and promotional processes.
2. Promote and enhance organisational performance while ensuring equity, consistency and transparency in the evaluation of Library staff.
3. Target training and developmental interventions to reflect the particular and evolving business and staff development needs
4. Promote mobility and devise succession plans to support the Library to meet future requirements and the ongoing development of staff.
5. Enhance and develop the Library's human resources (HR) policies and culture, and at the same time recognise the value and contributions made by Library staff.

It is intended to prioritise the achievement of these strategic goals during the period 2009 to 2011. During this period, considerable attention will continue to be given to the efficient management of day-to-day human resource issues and employee relations. The implementation of the Strategy will give rise to inevitable challenges given the finite financial resources available, particularly in the current economic climate. These challenges notwithstanding, the Library is committed to delivering the human resources strategy within an ambitious timeframe.

Background and Introduction

The Library's Human Resources Strategy 2009–2011 is designed to support and integrate with the Library's *Strategic Plan 2008–2010*.

The Library's mission is to:

Collect, preserve, promote and make accessible the documentary and intellectual record of the life of Ireland and to contribute to the provision of access to the larger universe of recorded knowledge.

A number of key strategic aims have been identified and are being actively pursued to support the realisation of this mission. These aims are detailed in our *Strategic Plan 2008–2010* and broadly relate to:

- Developing and safeguarding the Library's collections
- Delivering a quality service to Library users
- Achieving outreach, collaboration and synergy
- Improving the physical infrastructure of the Library
- Developing Library staff
- Developing the organisation

These strategic aims reflect the continuing evolution of the National Library; they also highlight the commitment to ensuring that the collections become increasingly accessible to Library users. While information and communication technologies are being used to enhance the Library's services, ultimately, superior levels of customer service can only be achieved through a combination of the skills, commitment, motivation and dedication of the Library's staff. This central tenet has implications for approaches to the management of human resources and the ongoing development of individual staff members' skills and capabilities. As a result, the Library's human resources strategy places particular significance on the careful selection, integration and development of Library staff, while simultaneously supporting career progression and improving performance management systems.

The Library's recruitment, selection and promotion processes will be subject to continuous review and adjustment consistent with best practice to ensure that candidate selection methods achieve the best possible outcome for the Library. Role requirements will be clearly defined, and more rigorous approaches will be applied to support and evaluate staff during their probationary periods. Recognising that opportunities for career progression and ongoing development are of critical importance to staff, particular attention will be given to identifying and addressing impediments to such opportunities.

An effective and user-friendly performance management system will be necessary in order to achieve the Library's broader strategic objectives and to promote workplace equity and provide for employee recognition. Work on the redevelopment of our existing system – the Performance Management Development System (PMDS) - is ongoing and will be completed during the early stages of this strategic planning period. Emphasis will be placed on the necessity to agree tangible objectives, coupled with the need to create greater clarity around the issue of shared goals. Improved guidance will be provided to support managers and employees in jointly identifying training and development needs. Clear criteria will be developed to support managers in the determination of performance ratings. In order to ensure equity, rating awards will be validated or jointly agreed by the senior management team.

A detailed training and development plan for the period 2008 to 2010 has been agreed and implementation is already underway. The Library is committed to achieving the objectives set out in the training plan through targeted training programmes for staff at all levels in the organisation subject, of course, to any budgetary constraints in the current climate. In order to ensure greater consistency in the identification of training and development needs, the HR Unit will work with line managers to clearly define the skill, competency and capability requirements which attach to individual positions at all levels across the organisation using PMDS.

The Library will also continue to encourage staff participation in further education and training through attendance at external courses by promoting and reviewing the Library's 'refund of fees scheme' with a view to increasing staff take-up of the scheme.

As the most progressive human resources systems and strategies are of little benefit in the absence of a supportive workplace culture and environment, the Library will continue to audit and improve policies and underlying practices. Particular emphasis will be placed on the enhancement of internal communications systems and processes.

It is intended to commission by 2010 a comprehensive employee opinion survey which will be part of the wider HR objective of securing for the Library a recognised standard of excellence in Human Resource Management.

A formal review of the Partnership process within the Library is currently underway in order to identify how structural, consultative and representative arrangements may be enhanced, ensuring the effectiveness of the process and with a view to promoting the Partnership Committee's relevance to all Library staff.

The Library plans to develop a formal mobility policy and to prepare 'succession' plans particularly for key positions in the organisation to ensure that the deployment of staff supports the business needs of the Library.

In addition to supporting further education and training, the Library will actively encourage staff members to participate on cross-functional projects to provide wider opportunities for ongoing learning and advancement.

The many demands that this Strategy will place on the organisation's HR team should not be underestimated and a collaborative approach across the Library will be required in order to help implement the strategy.

1. Recruitment, Selection and Promotion

To improve and enhance the quality, suitability, equity and predictability of the Library's recruitment, selection and promotional processes

In view of the Library's ongoing evolution, greater technological focus and a desire to improve the quality of services provided to users, it is essential that recruitment, selection and promotion processes are developed in such a way that the Library maximises its ability to attract the best candidates for all positions. Towards this end, there will be a greater focus on improving the definition of role requirements and ensuring that the Library's selection processes meet best practice in relation to candidate predictability.

Work will continue to identify and address any impediments to career progression so that all staff are supported in the achievement of their full potential. Managers' roles in the successful integration and development of individual staff members will also be emphasised.

Recognising that probationary evaluations are fundamental to the performance management process, the HR Unit will play a more active role in supporting managers during the probation period of individual staff. Assessments will be based on clearly defined criteria and the criteria will be applied in a consistent manner across the organisation.

Specifically, it is intended to:

1.1. Devise and agree a recruitment and selection policy, including a promotion policy, to be approved by the Board of the National Library.

1.2. Engage with line managers to review and assess candidate short-listing criteria. Jointly agree qualifications, skills, experience and related stipulations that reflect the Library's changing needs. Redevelop job/person descriptions to incorporate both changes in roles and the Library's recruitment requirements.

1.3. Support and facilitate all staff in the realisation of their full potential. Encourage career progression and skills acquisition by supporting staff with targeted training and developmental interventions.

1.4. Define and promote awareness of managers' role and responsibilities in supporting the successful integration and development of new staff members.

1.5. Develop formal assessment criteria to ensure that the probationary period is managed effectively. Ensure that line managers, with the support of HR Unit, conduct one-to-one meetings at regular specified intervals with new staff to assist managers in evaluating the suitability of probationary staff members.

2. Performance Management

To promote and enhance organisational performance while ensuring equity, consistency and transparency in the evaluation of staff

The effective operation of the Performance Management and Development System (PMDS) is critical to ensure the necessary focus on the delivery of the Library's mission and strategic aims and also to ensure greater workplace equity and employee recognition. It is recognised that approaches to performance management and employee development will require a degree of streamlining if they are to reflect the requirements of managers and staff. Related work has begun and will continue during the period of this plan.

Consistent with the organisation's Strategic Plan 2008-2010, objectives relating to areas such as customer service, information technology and employee development should become increasingly evident in the role profile forms of all staff. Further guidance on role profiles will be provided to ensure that tangible objectives are developed thus providing greater clarity in respect of shared goals.

Greater transparency and equity in performance management will be achieved as appropriate criteria are developed to help determine performance ratings for all staff. These criteria will in turn be subject to ongoing review and validation in order to ensure organisation-wide consistency.

The introduction of a Time and Attendance Management System will enable the Library to manage attendance and absence in a more structured and efficient manner thus enhancing organisational performance in this area in a consistent and transparent way.

Specifically, it is intended to:

2.1. Review, redesign and streamline PMDS forms and processes. Develop and launch a revised and user-friendly guide to PMDS to assist staff and managers in implementing PMDS.

2.2. Engage with line managers to develop Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Realistic, Timely (SMART) objectives, incorporating customer service priorities, in the role-profile forms of all staff members.

2.3. Continue to review the organisation-wide performance assessment criteria and definitions for each PMDS rating (1 to 5). Implement and manage the annual validation process to review and ensure equity and consistency in the allocation of performance appraisal ratings (1 to 5) to all Library staff.

2.4. Require all line managers to carry out the PMDS process for their staff by including that requirement as a key objective in the role profiles of all line managers, including by specifying that the PMDS process is concluded within an agreed time-frame.

2.5. Introduce a Time and Attendance Management System.

3. Training and Employee Development

To target training and developmental interventions to reflect the particular and evolving business and staff development needs

As the Library responds to increasing expectations on the part of users, while also embracing the opportunities which are afforded through improvements in communication and information technology, a greater focus on training and employee development will be needed. In this context, considerable effort will be invested in clearly defining the skill, competency and capability requirements which attach to individual positions at all levels across the organisation.

Opportunities for the temporary secondment of staff to similar/equivalent organisations will be explored to further promote staff learning, capability development and skills acquisition. Significant effort has already been invested in the development of the Library's Training Plan 2008-2010, and particular emphasis will be placed on delivering training priorities within budgetary constraints.

Specifically, it is intended to:

3.1. Design, develop and introduce a comprehensive induction programme for new staff joining the Library. Particular emphasis will be placed on important issues such as service delivery, professionalism, customer interactions, communications etc. We will ensure that participants clearly understand key policies and procedures in addition to understanding external functions that affect the Library's activities.

3.2. Engage with line managers to develop an inventory of: (i) necessary, (ii) desirable and (iii) 'succession-relevant' skills, competencies and other capability requirements for individual roles/grade levels. We will ensure joint manager/employee evaluation of associated training and development requirements as part of the PMDS process.

3.3. Develop and maintain a knowledge base of specialist (library) training providers, conferences, courses and participants' evaluations of quality/relevance.

3.4. Continue to promote and review the Library's 'refund of fees scheme'.

3.5. Consider the potential for deploying/seconding staff to and from similar/equivalent organisations for the purposes of skills acquisition and organisational capability development. A project team to investigate and develop recommendations will be convened.

3.6. Ensure continued implementation of the Library's Training Plan 2008–2010 subject to budgetary constraints.

4. Mobility and Succession Planning

Promote mobility and succession planning to support the Library to meet future requirements and the ongoing development of staff

The Library will ensure the effective deployment of staff to maintain business continuity while at the same enhancing career progression opportunities for staff. To this end, the Library will develop formalised approaches to mobility and succession planning.

Succession planning is an important issue for the Library. It is essential that appropriate measures are in place to maintain business continuity by ensuring that key posts in the Library can be filled without undue delay. As well as developing and implementing best practice in relation to recruitment, selection and staff training, the Library will develop and implement a mobility policy to support an effective approach to succession planning and to ensure that a reservoir of staff competency is developed. Staff participation in cross-functional projects will also be encouraged which will help staff develop their skills/capabilities.

An analysis of existing studentship arrangements will be undertaken in order to ensure that associated benefits are optimised both for the Library and for the students.

Specifically, it is intended to:

4.1. Develop formal mobility and succession planning policies and guidelines which, inter alia, consider the Library's evolving operational needs, particularly in the area of technology, potential loss of experience and skills through staff retirements, the strengths/preferences of Library staff etc

4.2. Engage with line managers in order to identify 'cross functional projects' which supports the business of the Library and provides personal and career development opportunities for all Library staff.

4.3. Undertake a review of the Library's studentship programmes in order to establish and enhance mutual benefits to both the Library and the student.

4.4. Continue to review and identify scope to enhance organisational efficiency and employee motivation through the more effective deployment and utilisation of Library staff. Examine the potential for areas such as broader and/or integrated activities, alternative processes/methodologies, the establishment of cross departmental project teams, as well as enhanced communication and information technology supports etc.

5. Culture, Equity and Communications

To enhance and develop the Library's HR policies, culture and communication arrangements, while recognising employee value and contributions

The provision of a professional and customer-focused library service will be dependent on the establishment and maintenance of an effective workplace culture. Towards this end, we will develop and promote equitable human resources policies that seek to recognise and reward the contributions of individuals and teams. In turn, we expect to be in a position to support the Library's achievements by continuing to attract and retain high-calibre staff.

A renewed focus will be placed on internal communication systems and on utilising the Library's Partnership Committee to develop an organisation-wide approach to the review, promotion and consolidation of existing arrangements. A review of the functioning and operation of the Partnership Committee is currently underway with a view to ensuring its effectiveness and to promoting its relevance to staff at all levels across the organisation.

A comprehensive evaluation of workplace culture will be undertaken to identify scope for continuous improvement. On the basis of employee opinion and feedback, clear priorities will be identified, articulated and pursued in a systematic manner.

The effectiveness of our Employee Assistance and Occupational Health Programmes will also be reviewed twice a year as we seek to build on the success of existing occupational health and related arrangements.

In order to underpin all of its HR-related activities, the Library will aim to secure a recognised standard of excellence in Human Resource Management

Specifically, it is intended to:

5.1. Produce a handbook of human resources policies, procedures and employee benefits to be provided to all staff and to all new entrants. Ensure that comprehensive policies and procedures are readily available to all staff.

5.2. Undertake a comprehensive employee opinion survey in order to establish benchmarks, and also monitor and improve areas such as workplace culture, teamwork, morale, equity, job satisfaction, communications etc.

5.3. Complete the formal review of the operation/effectiveness of the Library's Partnership Committee and scope for enhancement. Identify outstanding priorities/action items, pursue implementation, and develop monitoring arrangements.

5.4. Undertake a review of the Library's Employee Assistance and Occupational Health Programmes, and identify scope for improving accessibility and enhancing benefits to staff.

5.5. Secure a recognised standard of excellence in Human Resource Management.

Performance Monitoring and Impact Assessment

The objectives and actions which are contained in this Strategy have been identified as necessary to ensure that the business needs of the Library are supported and to ensure that Library staff have the opportunity to develop and to maximise their career progression potential.

Consistent with current organisational practice, an operational plan and unit business plans (detailing specific targets, actions and key performance indicators for each business area of the Library) will continue to be developed for each year of the business planning period. These will serve to provide further detail in respect of the particular actions and time-frames necessary to support the delivery of the goals and objectives set out in this document.

The ongoing evaluation of performance against targets set out in the business plans will serve to ensure that a focus on strategic priorities will be maintained. By articulating and clarifying priorities, an appropriate discipline may be observed as a distinction is made between short- and medium-term priorities.

Progress towards the achievement of the objectives and actions contained in this Strategy will be assessed by reference to the following performance indicators:

- Policies, programmes and systems developed and implemented
- Roles and competencies defined and agreed
- Training and development programmes and schemes implemented and evaluated
- Validation processes developed and implemented
- Performance objectives identified and pursued
- Projects identified and in place
- Reviews and evaluations successfully completed and recommendations implemented.

The Library wishes to acknowledge the contribution of RA Consulting to the development of this Strategy.