



### APPENDIX: More about ACESA

ACESA is the Association of Chief Executives of State Agencies in Ireland. The Association provides a forum for Chief Executives to discuss issues of mutual concern and enables them to develop and express a collective voice on issues that affect the sector.

ACESA achieves this by hosting briefing sessions on topics of common interest to CEOs, conducting an Annual Survey to learn more about the issues impacting on the work of CEOs and government agencies, and by providing support and an information network for members.

#### *Member Agencies:*

We have a diverse membership, CEOs of 100+ government agencies, impacting on all aspects of Irish society and the Irish economy including:

- Providing vital services such as housing, road safety and social care
- Protecting the environment and promoting sustainable practices
- Regulating professions
- Upholding fundamental rights
- Protecting citizens and consumers
- Promoting and protecting culture and heritage
- Supporting Irish business
- Driving research and innovation
- Setting and maintaining standards of excellence
- Promoting Ireland abroad

A full list of our current membership (104) can be viewed at [www.acesa.ie/members](http://www.acesa.ie/members)

#### *Members:*

- Our membership is comprised of 55 women and 49 men. \*
- 78% of our members' first contracts were 5 years length. \*\*
- 11% of our members' first contracts were 7 years length. \*\*
- A further 11% are/were on a different length of contract. \*\*
- For 75% of our members, their current role is their 1<sup>st</sup> role as CEO. \*
- 50% of our members previously worked in senior roles in the private sector. \*
- 26% of our members previously worked in the civil service. \*
- 44% of our members previously worked in a different government agency. \*
- 16% of our members previously worked in the charity / non-profit sector. \*
- 12% of our membership previously worked in academia. \*

\*ACESA Membership Survey 2021, completed by 70% of ACESA members.

\*\*ACESA Pulse Survey on CEO Contract, June 2022.

**ENDS**



to the willingness, experience, ability, and relationships held by a Board Chair. This is not desirable, is unfair to both the CEO and the Board, and is unsustainable in providing high quality public services.

**Some themes arising from the experiences of state agency CEOs, as outlined in a recent confidential survey of ACESA Members include:**

- Reduction in grade levels by DPER without any clarity as to basis, even when agency role and job size has increased.
- Inconsistency of terms and conditions and pension arrangements. Long and protracted processes, sometimes taking years to get contracts approved.
- Agency boards not having the ability to interact directly with DPER.
- Poor communication with and limited regard for the human at the centre of each process.
- No concept of succession planning on a partnership basis between the agency, the Department, and the DPER.



**Among the main improvements that ACESA members propose regarding senior public service recruitment and pay processes are:**

**Clear process for grading of a CEO role:** CEO grades vary from Principal to Deputy Secretary and **appropriately**, there are many factors that influence the level at which a role is pitched. Some of our members are leading agencies with teams of several hundred staff and significant budgets. Others lead agencies with a staff of less than ten and smaller budgets. However, these raw figures do not give the full picture, as many of our members lead work that is highly specialised and of huge importance to the Irish economy and wider society. We believe that the criteria and basis for determining the "job size" and corresponding grade should be set out transparently.

**Clarity about determining the length of term:** There is a lack of consistency regarding the length of the first term of a CEO of a state agency, with some being five years and others being seven. Similarly, to the grade of the position, flexibility could be given to agency boards to determine the length of a term, which could be to a maximum of twelve years across two terms, depending on the needs of the agency. For example, if there was a significant change in policy and direction needed, it might be more appropriate to have the initial term of length of 7 years with a renewal of five further years, if the board were happy to renew. The initial term would be in line with the length of service offered to Secretary General posts of government departments.

**Clarity of process and terms:** The process used for initial recruitment can be haphazard without standardised job descriptions, a lack of clarity regarding roles and responsibilities, and varying methods of recruitment.

**Openness to appointment to a third term:** At present, there seems to be little appetite, indeed there appears to be a great deal of resistance to appointing a CEO to a third term. ACESA agree that a third term should not be in anyway a 'given', and that a robust process of reappointment, including a process which invites external candidates should be used. However, we also are of the belief that in some circumstances a third term is desirable, and it should not be automatically considered inappropriate.

**Clear Timelines for reappointment processes:** In some instances, CEOs are serving well into their term, and the reappointment process, including contract negotiations has not been initiated. There should be a standard time when an automatic process is begun, e.g., 1 year - 18 months before end of contract, with clear timelines for each stage of the process.

This will serve the agency itself better and align with the need for due process and fair treatment of Agency CEOs, in line with the due process and fair treatment which is rightly in place for all public service employees.

**Clear Role for Agency Boards in appointment and reappointment process:** The Chair and Board of an Agency is the direct reporting line for any CEO, and therefore should be clear in its role and autonomy in the initial appointment process and any reappointment process. At present, Boards have no clear role, and it can often be left

*Response to the Independent Review Panel established to review Senior Public Service Recruitment and Pay Processes.*

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### **Introduction**

We submit this response to the review panel on behalf of more than 100 Chief Executive Officers (CEOs) of government agencies in Ireland. Our Association provides a forum for CEOs to discuss issues of mutual concern and enables us to develop and express a collective voice on issues that impact on the delivery of public services in Ireland.

As an organisation, we constantly consult our members on innovations, opportunities, and challenges they are experiencing in the delivery of services to citizens.

We understand the need for the public service to be agile and innovative, support the principle that the needs of state agencies change, and understand the necessity for the public service to be able to adapt to new challenges. In this context we recognise that this requires an ability to change state agency leadership.

However, we believe that this flexibility and room for agility must be coupled with clear, effective, and transparent processes, when dealing with recruitment and pay processes. From the experiences of our membership, clarity, effectiveness, and transparency are not characteristic of the current processes and therefore your review is very timely. The insight and feedback from our members demonstrate a pervasive, systemic failure across state agencies when it comes to these issues.

We submit this response in a spirit of partnership and look forward to working with you to build a more transparent and accountable process, so that we as CEOs can give our focus where it should be – the delivery of second to none, transformative public services to people living in Ireland.

A more detailed description of our membership and organisation can be found in the appendix to this document.