

Guide for Applicants

Finance and Procurement Officer

Key dates for applicants:

Closing date: 2:00pm, Monday 5 August 2024

Interviews will take place late August 2024

Contents

Prior to completing the application form we recommend that applicants familiarise themselves with the contents of this guide, which includes:

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1. A message from John French, Chief Executive

Dear Applicant,

Thank you for taking the time to read this Guide for Applicants for the role of Finance and Procurement Officer at the Utility Regulator.

This is an exciting time to join us, as we are expanding as an organisation so we can fully support Northern Ireland in meeting the challenges of climate change, the cost-of-living crisis and ensuring the continuity of energy and water supplies. Electricity, gas and water are essential services that support all homes and businesses in Northern Ireland. As an economic regulator, it is our role to enable, incentivise and hold energy and water companies to account for providing the very best levels of service and price for consumers both now and in the future.

We are ambitious about the future of the Utility Regulator. It is essential that we can enthusiastically and professionally support Northern Ireland in its transition to a net-zero carbon economy, whilst ensuring affordable and good quality electricity, gas and water services for all.

We want the Utility Regulator to be the best possible organisation to work for. We need passionate people who have the skills, potential and motivation to make a difference to the lives of people in Northern Ireland and its economy. We are looking for people who share these goals and will pursue these with the highest standards of professionalism. For the Utility Regulator to be successful, we will recruit the best candidates from a range of diverse backgrounds. If you strive to provide the highest levels of service for the greater good and your professional values accord with our organisational values, working here will be exactly what you are looking for in the next step in your career path.

We are an employer of choice and are committed to staff wellbeing, inclusion and excellence. Over the last three years we have been awarded Best Companies 'Ones to Watch Good to Work For' status. We have also been successful in gaining the Investors in People Silver award, together with the Diversity Mark and Disability Committed accreditations.

Working as a Finance and Procurement Officer within the Utility Regulator, you will play a key part in providing operational support within the finance team across a broad remit including procurement, payroll, financial management, budgetary monitoring, and reporting.

This is a permanent, full-time role, although flexible working will be considered.

Thank you for your interest in joining the Utility Regulator. We very much look forward to receiving your application.

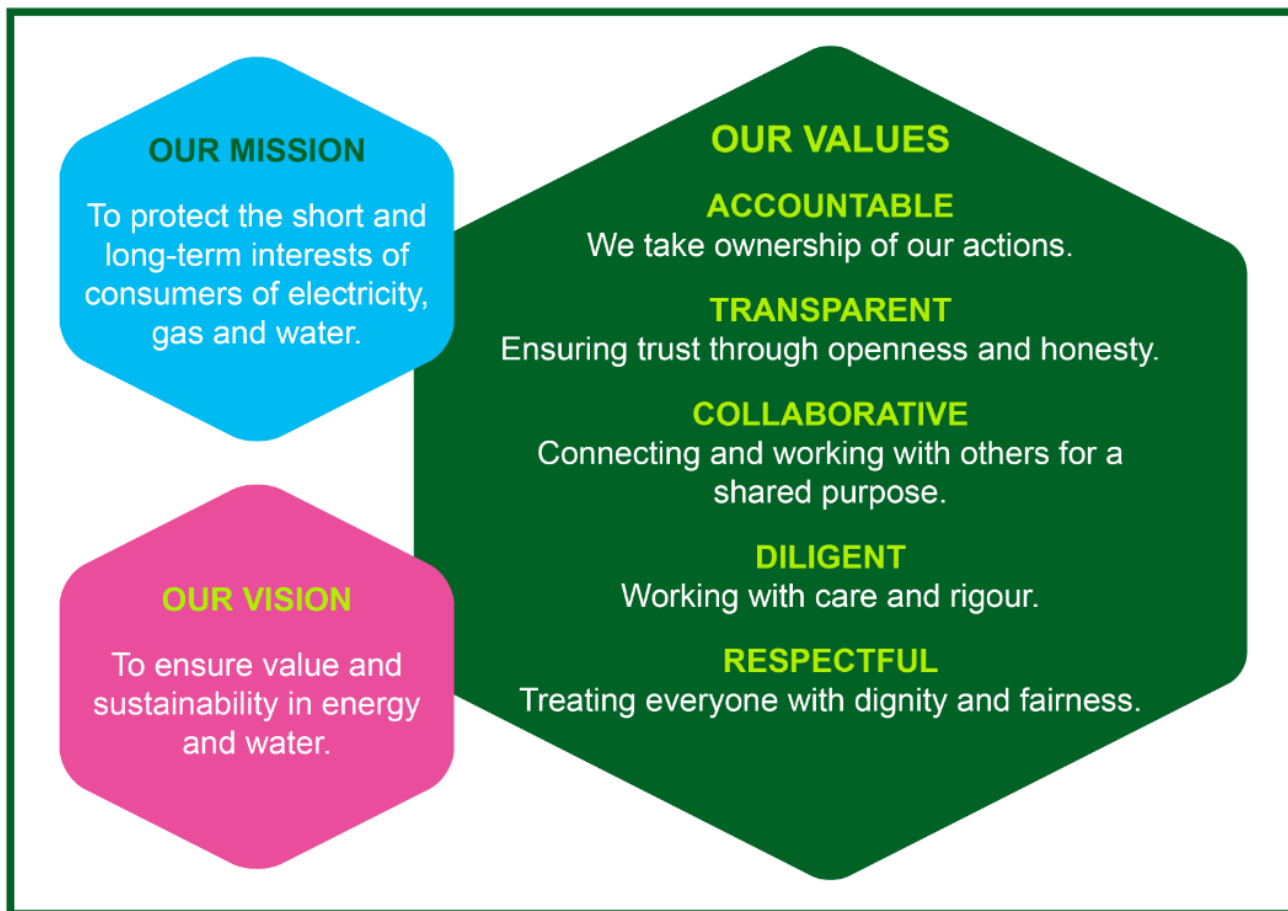


John French, Chief Executive

2. About us, Northern Ireland’s Utility Regulator

Who we are

The Utility Regulator (UR/our/we) is an independent non-ministerial government department. This means that we are accountable to the Northern Ireland Assembly and not to another government department. This is an important distinction as it protects our independence in carrying out our regulatory duties. Our purpose is to regulate Northern Ireland’s electricity, gas, water and sewerage industries to protect the short and long-term interests of consumers.



We are governed by a Board and accountable to the Northern Ireland Assembly through financial and annual reporting obligations. Along with the Chief Executive’s Office, we are organised into four directorates, under two Executive Directors:

1. Consumer and Business Protection;
2. Price Controls;
3. Markets; and
4. Networks and Energy Futures.

Our diversity statement

Be UR Self

We recognise and value that everyone is unique and that we all have different minds. We want to use your difference so that we can harness your unique talent. To that end, we are a diverse and inclusive organisation as we put the 'you are' into 'UR'. Our success is based on the diversity and uniqueness that each of us brings and on the willingness of staff to accept and value one another. This approach helps us protect consumers by making a positive difference to all households and businesses in Northern Ireland.

Equality welcoming statement

Northern Ireland continues to have an under-representation of women across STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics) industries. We are an equal opportunities and 'Disability Confident' employer. As people with a disability, people from ethnic minority communities and women are currently under-represented in our workforce, we would welcome applications from these groups.

What we do

Our statutory objectives are to:

- Protect the short and long-term interests of electricity, gas, water and sewerage consumers with regard to price and quality of service;
- Promote a robust and efficient water and sewerage industry, where appropriate, to deliver high quality services;
- Promote competition, where appropriate, in the generation, transmission and supply of electricity; and
- Promote the development and maintenance of an economic and coordinated natural gas industry.

Our work involves:

- Issuing and maintaining licences for gas, electricity, and water companies to operate in Northern Ireland;
- Making sure that these companies meet relevant legislation and licence obligations;
- Challenging these companies to keep the prices they charge as low as they can be;
- Encouraging regulated companies to be more efficient and responsive to customers;
- Working to encourage competition in the gas, electricity, water, and sewerage services markets;
- Setting the standards of service which regulated companies provide to customers in Northern Ireland; and
- Acting as an adjudicator on certain customer complaints, disputes, and appeals.

We hold concurrent competition law powers and are Northern Ireland's competition authority for its electricity, gas, water and sewerage industries. We have quasi-judicial powers to determine certain complaints, disputes and appeals.

In order to help us protect the interests of electricity, gas and water consumers in Northern Ireland, we work with a range of partner organisations. These include:

- Northern Ireland Executive and Assembly;
- Northern Ireland government departments;
- Energy and water utility companies;
- The Consumer Council for Northern Ireland;
- Government departments and bodies in Great Britain and Ireland, including Ofgem, Ofwat, the Water Industry Commission for Scotland, and the Commission for Regulation of Utilities; and
- Non-governmental organisations.

3. About the role

Role: Finance and Procurement Officer
Directorate: Chief Executive's Office
Line manager: Finance and Procurement/Governance Analyst

Terms and conditions:

Contract: Permanent. Flexible working arrangements will be considered,
Hours: 37 hours per week.
Salary: £30,181 to £33,043 per annum
Pension: Northern Ireland Civil Service (NICS) pension arrangements
Holidays: 25 days per annum (rising to 30 days after two years), and an additional 12 public and privilege days.

We may create a reserve list from this competition to fill any additional suitable similar roles.

Role purpose:

Working as a Finance and Procurement Officer within the Utility Regulator, you will play a key part in providing operational support within the finance team across a broad remit including procurement, financial management (payroll processing, VAT, supplier payments, debt management, banking, accounts journals and reconciliations), budgetary monitoring and reporting processes. You will assist in meeting the Department of Finance (DoF) budgetary and accounting requirements and will be involved in the year-end accounts process. You will contribute to both internal and external audits including the implementation of any recommendations and will review staff adherence with internal policies, acting on non-compliance.

This role will require a well-organised individual who can work on their own initiative, flexibly and collaboratively in a professional manner with strong attention to detail and excellent organisational skills to prioritise your workload.

Main responsibilities

The main responsibilities of the role are set out below. **Please note that this list is not exhaustive and will change over time according to organisational need and evolution:**

- Display the values of the Utility Regulator, and the Northern Ireland Civil Service's Code of Ethics.
- Support the Chief Executive, Board, and Leadership Team of the Utility Regulator.
- Support the Finance and Procurement Manager and wider team in the implementation, production, maintenance, and improvement of all financial, procurement, fraud, and risk management related processes, in line with recognised best practice, including guidance from HM Treasury and the DoF. This includes:
 - Processing payment runs (in line with prompt payment compliance), credit card statements, and travel claims.
 - Processing of monthly payroll and VAT returns and related reports.

- Identifying any discrepancies within finance (invoices etc.), payroll and procurement, and resolve in a timely manner.
- Carrying out bank lodgements and transfers.
- Carrying out month-end processes, which includes posting of monthly journals, prepayments, accruals, depreciation, and reconciliation of control accounts.
- Reviewing invoices for payment against business cases and contract limits/terms, and identifying, and communicating any potential issues.
- Generating and issuing sales invoices, including annual licence fees, and undertaking debt recovery as and when required.
- Supporting the administration of purchasing, procurement, and tender activities, in-line with public sector best practice.
- Assisting with in-house procurement exercises including maintaining and monitoring the procurement and contract register.
- Assisting with reporting to internal and external stakeholders including Utility Regulator's Board, DoF, HMRC, Pensions Branch and auditors.
- Assisting in the identification, revision, and development of finance, procurement and payroll policies and procedures to increase the effectiveness of the overall finance function.
- Supporting the maintenance of both the hospitality and conflicts of interest register.
- Build and maintain constructive relationships with a broad range of internal and external stakeholders of the Utility Regulator at all levels, whilst ensuring any conflicts are proactively and effectively resolved.
- Support the risk management strategy and processes which includes the identification and mitigation of risks and business continuity planning.
- Support the timely production and quality assurance of the Utility Regulator's Annual Report and Accounts and year-end audit requirements.
- To assist in strengthening the profile, reputation and relevancy of the Utility Regulator to staff, consumers, stakeholders and industry.
- To promote a culture of openness, inclusiveness and transparency across all aspects of the Utility Regulator's operational activity and service delivery.
- Fulfil and actively contribute to the values of the Utility Regulator.

This list is not exhaustive and the successful candidate will be required to carry out other duties as allocated by management.

Our statutory remit and organisational structure are continuing to evolve. It is therefore quite possible that the scope of the advertised role will evolve with consequential changes to the job description.

4. Selection criteria

Essential criteria (for all candidates)

Please note you will be required to **demonstrate fully** the following essential criteria (1-6) on the **application form** to be shortlisted for the next stage of the process.

1. One of the following qualifications: Accounting Technicians Ireland (ATI)/ Association of Accounting Technicians (AAT) qualified/Associate Chartered Accountant (ACA), Association of Chartered Certified Accountants (ACCA), Chartered Institute of Management Accountants (CIMA) part qualified (or equivalent) and at least two years' relevant demonstrable experience in a similar role.
2. At least one years' experience processing payroll with the use of Sage or equivalent.
3. Ability to demonstrate excellent organisational skills and experience working to deadlines while ensuring attention to detail and accuracy.
4. Proven experience working with computerised finance systems and use of other computer packages, such as Excel to analyse and evaluate financial data.
5. Demonstrable experience of building constructive and collaborative relationships with a diverse range of stakeholders, both internal and external to successfully deliver organisational objectives.
6. Ability to demonstrate an understanding of and commitment to workplace values that align to those of the Utility Regulator. (Our mission, vision and values can be found on page 4 of this pack).

Desirable criteria

In the event of a large number of applicants, the following desirable criteria will be used as further shortlisting criteria. This criterion **should be demonstrated on the application form** and may be tested further at the interview stages.

1. Experience of public sector budgeting and accounting requirements.
2. Experience of assisting with the production of year-end accounts in line with Financial Reporting Manual (FRm) and DoF guidance.
3. Experience of using 'Sunsystems' finance system.

Key skills and competencies

In addition to satisfying the above essential criteria, **applicants will be expected to display the following competencies and skills at interview and assessment stages.**

Professional knowledge/skills	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ability and willingness to build relevant knowledge and skills. • Strong digital skills and IT skills. • Ability to take a high degree of individual responsibility and deliver with limited supervision and diligence.
Analytical rigour	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Highly proficient in the use of excel for financial analysis and reporting. • High-level of attention to detail and accuracy.

<p>Governance</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ability to apply best practice and work within organisational legal and governance requirements. • Ability to identify and mitigate risks.
<p>People</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strong communication and interpersonal skills. • Positive and proactive alignment with the Utility Regulator’s values. • Ability to work positively and collaboratively with individuals and in teams.
<p>Relationship management</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ability to positively challenge and resolve conflicts proactively and effectively to obtain a satisfactory resolution/outcome. • A proactive, collaborative, and flexible attitude, with ability to work in partnership with internal and external stakeholders.
<p>Strategic thinking and delivery</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ability to take personal ownership of work streams and drive forward to conclusion with minimum supervision. • Ability to think creatively, to innovate and resolve problems.
<p>Managing resources</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strong organisational and time management skills to balance priorities effectively and meet deadlines. • Ability to enhance processes for improvement whilst ensuring and conformity to applicable statutory and regulatory requirements.

Competency Framework

You may wish to consider our Competency Framework when completing your application. A copy can be downloaded alongside this recruitment pack.

5. The recruitment and selection process

How to apply

Completed application forms must be received by **2:00pm, Monday 5 August 2024**.

Please submit your application by email, in MS Word format. A typed or scanned signature will be accepted. Please submit your completed equal opportunities monitoring form in a separate email labelled clearly 'Monitoring Form' in the subject line.

The onus is on you to ensure your application is received before the closing date and we will use the time it is received according to our computer systems, and not the time sent from your email account.

Applications and queries must be emailed to recruitment@uregni.gov.uk.

If you have a disability and require assistance, we will facilitate this on request. If you wish to receive this information pack in an accessible format, please advise of your requirements as soon as possible as the closing date is the same for all applicants.

Monitoring form

We monitor applications for employment in terms of community background, sex, disability and race. You should note that this information is regarded as part of your application and failure fully to complete and return it will result in disqualification.

The use and confidentiality of community background information is protected by the Fair Employment and Treatment (Northern Ireland) Order 1998. It will be used only for monitoring, investigations or proceedings under the requirements of the above legislation.

We are committed to equality of opportunity and welcome applications from all suitably qualified applicants irrespective of age, sexual orientation, marital status/civil partnership, dependants, religious belief, political opinion, gender reassignment, race, sex or disability.

Job applicant's privacy notice

We are the data controller for the personal information you provide as an individual seeking employment. This means we determine the purposes for which, and the manner in which, any personal information relating to your application and the recruitment procedure generally is processed. We are required under the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) to notify you of the information contained in our Job Applicant's Privacy Notice. This notice describes how we collect and use personal information during the recruitment process and afterwards in accordance with GDPR and can be downloaded, in full, from www.uregni.gov.uk/publications/gdpr-privacy-notices

Applications

In order to help you make this application and ensure that each applicant is provided with the same opportunity, the following advice is offered:

- Do not use acronyms, complex technical detail, etc. Write for the reader who will probably not know your employer or your job. Include concise examples and be sure you can expand on these at interview.

- Listing the titles of the various jobs which you have held will not show how you meet the criteria. The panel will not make assumptions about skills and experience gained from these or the nature/name of the organisation.
- Write down clearly your personal involvement in any experience you quote. Write 'I' statements, for example, I planned meetings, I managed a budget, I prepared a presentation. It is how you actually carried out the piece of work that the panel will be interested in.
- Identify relevant examples – this is very important as examples you provide may be checked out at interview and you need to be prepared to talk about them in detail if invited to interview. It is your unique role the panel is interested in, not your team's.

An application form is designed to ensure you provide the necessary information to determine how you meet the eligibility/short listing criteria required for this post. The panel may decide to interview only those applicants who appear, from the information provided on your application, to be most suitable in terms of relevant experience and ability.

Please note to ensure equality of opportunity for all applicants:

- On the application form you have been advised of the maximum space available for each question. This is the same for all applicants and must not be altered (except to delete spaces created when you type in your answer);
- CVs, letters, additional pages or any other supplementary material in place of, or in addition to, completed application forms will not be accepted;
- Information in support of your application will not be accepted after the closing deadline. Incomplete application forms will not be considered. Application forms received after the closing deadline or reformatted will not be accepted;
- Please note that the time of receipt of emailed applications will be defined by our computer systems, not the time and date sent; and
- Only details provided by you on your application form (employment history and eligibility criteria) will be provided to the selection panel for the purpose of determining eligibility and shortlisting for the post.

Assessing your application

After the closing date, the first stage in the selection process will be a sift of completed application forms against the essential criteria. You must demonstrate on the relevant page of the application form how you meet each criteria stated. If you do not fully demonstrate by example how you meet each of the criteria, you will not progress to the next stage. Please note, where the criteria requires experience for a minimum length of time, the panel will not refer to the employment history section to demonstrate this. You must state the dates in your answer.

You will be notified of the outcome (successful/unsuccessful) by email.

Assessment and interview

Following shortlisting, it is intended that the selection process will involve an assessment and interview against **the criteria, key skills and competencies** for the role. Panels may test any aspect of either the essential criteria or key skills.

Additional selection stages may be needed. We intend that the assessment and interview process will take place at Queens House in Belfast. You will be informed of assessment

and interview arrangements closer to the time and notified of the outcome (successful or unsuccessful) by email.

Disability requirements at interview

We ask on this application form if you require any reasonable adjustments (special requirements), due to disability, to enable you to attend interview. Details of any disability are only used for this purpose and do not form any part of the selection process.

If you have indicated that you have a disability and are successful in the selection process and being considered for appointment, you may be required to outline any adjustments you consider needed to take up an appointment. If you wish to discuss your disability requirements further, please email recruitment@uregni.gov.uk.

Further information

Further information about the work of the Utility Regulator can be found at www.uregni.gov.uk.

Should you have any further queries about the recruitment and selection process then please email recruitment@uregni.gov.uk.

Checklist for applicants

- Application form (emailed by closing date).
- Equality monitoring form (emailed in a separate email).

6. Benefits of working for us

These headline terms will be included (amongst others) in a written contract of employment.

Key employee benefits

Your salary

The starting base salary will be in the range of £30,181 to £33,043 per annum. If you are successful, you will normally be offered the first point on the scale. You will be paid monthly in arrears via Bankers Automated Clearing Service (BACS).

Your pension

If you are successful, you will be employed as a civil servant and, as such, automatically enrolled into the NICS pension arrangements. **Employer's contribution for this salary range is 34.25%**. This is a generous, defined benefit pension scheme. Information about pensions can be found at www.finance-ni.gov.uk/topics/working-northern-ireland-civil-service/civil-service-pensions-ni

Your holiday entitlement

Holiday entitlement will be pro-rated based on **25 days per annum (increasing to 30 days after two years' continuous service) and 12 public and privilege holidays**. If, in your current role, you have already attained 30 days' leave by dint of service with the Northern Ireland or Great Britain Civil Service, your entitlement will be 30 days from your start date (pro-rated).

Non-salary benefits

We offer a range of non-salary benefits including a supportive family friendly environment, flexible working in a hybrid setting, generous leave including special leave, maternity/paternity entitlement, wellbeing and employee programme (Inspire), supported learning and development, Cycle to Work Scheme, season ticket loan, payroll giving, volunteering opportunities and a culture that supports diversity and inclusion.

Hours of work

This is a full-time appointment, however, flexible working arrangements will be considered. Our offices are open for business between 7am and 7pm (Monday to Friday). You may avail of 'flexitime', provided it meets business needs, with flexible start and finish times outside core hours of 10am to 4pm. Due to the nature of your position, you may be required to work such additional hours, over and above your standard hours, (37 hours excluding meal breaks) as necessary for the proper fulfilment of your duties for which no additional payment will be made.

Place of work

If appointed, you will be our employee and based at Queens House, Queen Street, Belfast. As of 1 March 2024, we operate a hybrid working pattern, which is an average of 40% of all staff working hours to be in person with colleagues, either on-site at Queens House or on official business. This hybrid working pattern is subject to business need. The home working element of hybrid working is voluntary and while you may opt to be office based, we welcome applicants whose circumstances lend themselves to a degree of remote working.

Mobility

Excluding secondment opportunities, employment does not confer any right of mobility or transfer to a position in any other part of NICS (including any government department or agency) or to any non-departmental public body or other public body.

Probationary period

There will be a probationary period of six months and continued employment is dependent on the outcome of this. During the probationary period, your performance will be regularly monitored and we reserve the right to extend it for such further period or periods as considered reasonably necessary to assess your performance further.

Additional information

If you are being considered for appointment, we will ask you to complete the AccessNI application form for a **basic disclosure certificate**. Full details will be provided with an offer of employment. Instructions can be found at www.nidirect.gov.uk/accessni.

You should not be put off applying because you have a conviction. We deal with all criminal record information in a confidential manner and information relating to convictions is destroyed after a decision is made. Criminal record information is subject to the provisions of the Rehabilitation of Offenders (NI) Order 1978.

As a Utility Regulator employee, you will be subject to various office policies, for example, rules on shareholdings, conflicts of interest and future appointments.

Right to work and nationality requirements

Offers of employment will be made on merit but we must ensure you are legally entitled to work in the UK. Offers will be made on condition of proof of right to work and pre-employment checks will be conducted. You will need to show one of the following:

- Passport;
- National Identity Card or Home Office registration certificate; and
- UK Border Agency work document if you need permission to work.

As an employer, we can face unlimited fines if we employ illegal workers and so must make sure no one we employ is working illegally. However, to protect against discrimination laws, we should treat all job applicants equally. So do not be offended if you are asked to prove your nationality as even UK nationals will be asked to provide proof. For further support on working in Northern Ireland, please visit www.nidirect.gov.uk/articles/working-northern-ireland or www.gov.uk/browse/visas-immigration/what-you-need-to-do

Please note that, if your application is shortlisted for interview, you will be asked to provide one of the above documents. Should you fail to do so, you may not be eligible to proceed. The successful candidate will be required to produce the same document in its original format before commencing employment.