

Professional Development and Public Service Renewal

Institute of Public Administration
Strategy 2011–2015

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Preface

The Institute of Public Administration was founded at a meeting attended by senior public servants and academics on 6 November 1957 in Newman House, the original home of University College Dublin (UCD). According to our first director, Tom Barrington, the Institute was established ‘to give effect to the concern of Irish public servants for raising the standard of their profession’. Its stated aim was to promote the study and improve the standard of public administration.

In the intervening years the Institute has developed to become the primary education, development and research agency for the whole of the Irish public service. It has also earned a strong reputation for its assistance to public administration internationally.

Since 1957 the Institute has supported the public service and public servants through many difficult periods, but arguably none more difficult than the one we now face. It is clear that in seeking to address severe economic challenges Ireland also needs to implement major changes in the public sector.

But, as at the beginning, the Institute retains a fundamental belief in the profession of public service and in the high ideals and traditions of that profession. The Institute believes that, through learning, development, research and engagement with the international community, our public sector can not only successfully address the challenges ahead but also thereby provide better public services to our citizens.

So in this strategy for 2011–2015 the Institute sets out to build on our success to date as the foremost professional development agency for the Irish public service with a strong international focus. We will provide for the professional development of public servants, and for the organisational development of public service bodies, to meet the challenges facing us now and in the future.

As a professional development institute, the IPA must be focused both on the world of practice and on learning from practice. We are delighted that through a new formal partnership recently concluded with UCD the Institute will retain the independent role envisaged for it in 1957 while establishing a strong strategic link to our largest national university. Through this connection, the Institute will become a recognised college of UCD in 2011, thus opening an exciting new phase in our development, and also many new high-quality learning and development opportunities for our clients.



Brian Cawley
Director General

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Brian Cawley".



John Tierney
Chairman

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "John Tierney".



Introduction

Introduction

The Institute of Public Administration is the primary provider of education, training and development services for the public service in Ireland, and has been since first established in 1957. The Institute enjoys an excellent reputation both nationally and internationally for providing capacity-building services and support to public sector development and reform.

In the past five years we have significantly developed our business, including developing a range of new services in such areas as governance, leadership and public policy. However, since our environment has fundamentally changed in the period since 2005, when our last corporate strategy was launched, this strategy must address a new set of issues, challenges and business realities.

In particular, the economic downturn has impacted on all parts of the economy, including the public sector and the Institute itself. In the period of this strategy it is likely that the need to stabilise the public finances will continue to dominate. Achieving efficiency, effectiveness and transformation of work practices in the Irish public service will present a major challenge. This will demand the highest standards of professionalism in our public service. To resolve the challenges that face us, Ireland and its public service must operate effectively as part of a connected global community, sharing challenges, experience and solutions with colleagues and experts in Europe and beyond.

The Institute is unique in combining research and academic development with practical advice and support for the public sector. It is towards further developing the Institute as a professional development agency for the public service, both nationally and internationally, that this strategy is directed. This will involve complementing our already strong connections to the Irish public service with equally strong connections to the academic sector nationally and internationally, while all the time maintaining a focus on providing practical, relevant and cost-effective support to our clients.

This strategy is the result of an extensive consultation process, conducted both externally and internally. We recognise that we launch this strategy at a time of major uncertainty. This in turn means that the level of risk normally associated with the implementation of a strategy is now even greater. Therefore, the objectives and supporting activities set out in the strategy will need to be kept under constant review, and we must be able to adapt and modify the strategy as new circumstances may dictate.



Our Environment

Economy and Public Finance

Irish Public Sector

Education

National and International Crisis

Our Environment

Economy and Public Finance

We present this strategy at a time of economic crisis nationally and globally. The full impact of the economic downturn is still being felt, with little or no prospect of it abating until at least 2014.

This has led to the need for severe adjustments in the public finances that are likely to continue for most of the period of this strategy. *The National Recovery Plan 2011–2014* envisages the scaling back of current government expenditure by 11 percentage points of GNP over the period of the plan.¹ This in turn will adversely impact on the resources available to our clients for funding staff and organisational development.

While the Institute moved quickly to reduce its cost base to address the downturn, further action to maintain our finances will need to be taken over the coming years. The opportunity for revenue growth in our traditional markets is severely limited, so the Institute must look to new markets, including international markets, and develop new services to maintain revenues. The significant reductions in our operating costs already achieved will need to be consolidated, and opportunities for further cost savings identified.

Irish Public Sector

The impetus for reform of the public sector has never been greater, not least because of the economic difficulties referred to above. The aim is to achieve improved performance, greater flexibility and mobility, and greater efficiency, effectiveness and economy in the delivery of public services. *The National Recovery Plan* envisages that 'the public service will be smaller, with fewer organisations and fewer staff operating from a reduced number of locations with significantly reduced resources'.

This in turn creates opportunities for the Institute to support the public service change agenda. The IPA is a pan-public service provider and, as such, is in a strong position to support change through developing the professional

¹ Government of Ireland (2010) *The National Recovery Plan 2011–2014*, Dublin: Stationery Office.

capacity of public servants, providing practical advice and support across all sectors, and providing a forum for dialogue and debate on the challenges of change. Because we have already developed a strong relationship with, and services for, senior public servants, we are well placed to support the future development needs of this group. There will also be the need to develop the capacity at middle-management level in the public service to manage effectively with limited resources and to evaluate the use of those resources. There will be a need for practical support and advice on change management, human resource management, and process and procurement management. But learning and development in the public service must take place within a coherent, professional development framework that supports both the concept of lifelong learning and the reality that public servants must constantly update their knowledge and skills to operate effectively in a more mobile and flexible workplace.

The challenge of maintaining high ethical and governance standards in public service is also of critical importance, and through its research and practical support the Institute must make this a key aspect of its remit.

Education

In the sphere of higher education, both globally and nationally, there is a trend towards consolidation and the achievement of critical institutional mass. While to date this has not had implications for institutes similar to our own in other countries, many of which are more closely linked to central government, internationally there has been a growing trend for smaller, specialist higher-education colleges to develop closer links with larger universities. In Ireland too there is also likely to be a further impetus towards consolidation and integration at third level, and this is expected to extend beyond loosely coupled strategic partnerships.

At this time there is also a major and specific threat to our accreditation processes with the proposed dissolution of the National University of Ireland (NUI) announced by the government.

In recognition of these factors, but also by way of positioning the Institute as a highly credible and unique provider that builds professional capacity within recognised academic and professional frameworks, the Institute will develop a strong, formal partnership with a major Irish university as part of this strategy.

This will provide, over the period of this strategy, the basis for accreditation of IPA programmes by a university partner, for building a professional development framework for public servants, and for developing new joint services nationally and internationally.

National and International Crisis

We launch this strategy at a time of crisis for the economy, with an erosion of public confidence in the capacity of our public administration to address the major challenges that we face as a society. There is debate not alone about the best way of resolving the current crisis but also about the extent, nature and causes of the problem. In this context it is important that the Institute provides practical help to public service organisations and public servants to address the challenges that they now face, and that we help to support reflection upon, and understanding of, how these problems can be better understood and resolved. This requires adding to our current store of knowledge and engaging with all of those with a stake in developing public administration, so that we can learn from current difficulties and develop new approaches that are robust and innovative.

Through this strategy the Institute can stay true to its tradition of service to the public sector and also play a part in building the confidence and sense of purpose now needed to face some of the most severe challenges since the foundation of the state.



Purpose and Values

Purpose and Values

The purpose of the Institute is to advance the understanding, standard and practice of public administration and public policy.

We do this by building knowledge, skills and capacity in the public service, knowing that by improving the practice of public administration we contribute to improving the quality of service to citizens.

In particular, the Institute aims to:

- Support the further development of an effective, efficient and integrated public service by building professional capacity
- Promote debate and dialogue about current and future challenges in public administration and how best to address them
- Be recognised nationally and internationally as a leading professional institute for the public service
- Promote the values, standards and ethos that underpin the profession of public service
- Be part of a network of linked national and international academic and professional bodies so as to enhance the range and quality of our services to clients
- Add to knowledge and understanding of public administration by researching and publishing on key roles and relationships in the public service, government, parliament and civil society

Our approach to realising our vision is underpinned by our core values and beliefs:

- Improvement in public sector performance comes from developing knowledge and understanding, building professional capacity and supporting the achievement of clear purpose and high standards
- Commitment to independent analysis as the basis for informed debate on public administration and public policy
- Irish public administration must be understood and developed in a national, European and international context
- Having excellent and motivated staff is of vital importance
- The approach to delivering our business must be sustainable, cost-effective and efficient
- Working in close partnership with academic and professional bodies is critical to success
- There must be dedication to service that is of the highest quality and that is open, accessible and responsive to clients' needs

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Challenges, Objectives and Activities

Challenges, Objectives and Activities

1. The challenge for the public service will be to develop a flexible and responsive work environment and people who are able to manage effective delivery of services with less resources.

Our objective is to provide flexible and practical support for change and development across the whole of the public service.

- Help address urgent needs, uncertainties and evolving challenges within public service organisations by providing relevant and timely advisory, training, development and information services, including in such areas as capacity planning and achieving value for money
- Progressively refine existing training, consultancy and development services to specifically build capacity in areas such as leadership, management of people and other resources, governance, policy analysis and evaluation, and service delivery
- Design and implement a competency review process in the public service to inform the relevance and content of IPA programmes and to act as an information and planning resource for our clients
- Promote the Institute as a source of expert advice and support to public service organisations
- Develop modular, tailored learning and other resources to support workplace learning and improved organisational performance
- Identify and implement opportunities for joint delivery of training/consultancy projects with our university partner

2. The challenge for the public service will be to develop a professional cadre based on recognised, high-quality accreditation.

Our objective is to enhance professional capacity in the public service by developing the Whitaker School of Government and Management as the leading professional development school for the Irish public service.

- Prepare a five-year plan to develop and profile the Whitaker School of Government and Management as a specialist national school of public administration, making the school the locus of all our accredited and research programmes
- Identify, develop and deliver new accredited programmes for the public service to develop relevant knowledge and skills, including joint programmes with our university partner
- Engage with key client organisations, stakeholders, professional bodies and our university partner to develop a professional development framework and credentialing system for public servants
- Develop processes for engaging public servants, including senior public servants, with the activities and future development of the Whitaker School
- Build the academic and scholarly capacity of the Whitaker School so as to support the attainment of status as the leading professional development school for the public service
- Transition accreditation of NUI programmes to new university arrangements and implement supporting quality-assurance and validation processes
- Develop the Whitaker School as a repository of key public service information

3. The challenge is to develop informed dialogue and analysis on the future direction of Irish public administration.

Our objective is to contribute to the development of Irish public administration, including meeting current and future challenges, through relevant research and publishing, and by stimulating debate and dialogue.

- Design and implement a core research project to address current and future challenges in Irish public administration, to be delivered on the basis of regular reports and working papers over the period of the strategy, and disseminate the findings
- Identify and pursue joint research opportunities with our university partner and other national and international institutions that help to inform understanding of, and to address, critical and current challenges
- Deliver seminars and conferences and facilitate networks, web-based activities and other events to promote timely and relevant dialogue and debate both inside and outside the public service
- Focus our publishing strategy on texts and articles that enhance understanding of current and future challenges in public management and administration, and that promote staff and student research
- Pursue opportunities for funded research in the area of public management
- Build on our commitment to corporate social responsibility by engaging with the wider community to promote interest in and understanding of public policy and administration

4. The challenge is to situate the discussion on the future of Irish public administration in a wider European and global context, and to support the government strategy to attract more international students, while continuing to build public service capacity internationally.

Our objective is to develop the international activities and profile for the whole of the Institute.

- Identify, target and develop specific international markets for IPA services
- Collaborate with our university partner to develop new services based on European and international public administration in order to attract an international audience and to create opportunities for positioning discussion of Irish public administration and public policy in a broader European and international context
- IPA International Services to have responsibility for attracting and managing international business projects
- Increase the number and broaden the range of international public service capacity-building and technical-assistance contracts delivered by IPA

5. The challenge is to continue to support the development of Irish public administration and public management at a time of very constrained resources.

Our objective is to maintain and further develop the IPA as an efficient and financially viable organisation that can continue to deliver services within a sustainable budgetary framework.

- Prepare medium-term budgetary forecasts that incorporate key revenue and cost assumptions, including relevant data from *The National Recovery Plan 2011–2014*, to provide a financial framework for strategy implementation, financial sustainability and necessary reinvestment in infrastructure and capacity
- While seeking to develop potential new business services and related revenue streams, maintain focus across all parts of the Institute on consolidating existing business
- Identify opportunities for further efficiencies through a rolling programme of value-for-money reviews
- Maintain and further develop physical and technological infrastructure
- Maintain and further develop financial and management information processes and controls
- Maintain and enhance corporate governance and management processes
- Agree and implement financial and budgetary strategy relating to IPA/university partnership
- Prepare robust business plans and associated key performance indicators to support strategy implementation and monitor progress

6. The challenge is to further develop the capacity to deliver specialist development services to the public service at a time of significant resource constraint.

Our objective is to market our services effectively whilst further fostering a culture of innovation and quality, further developing organisational and people capacity, and leveraging a new university partnership to support strategy implementation.

- Put in place medium-term individual development plans to support our aim of developing as a specialist provider in public administration, and create opportunities for workplace learning and innovation
- Assess and, as necessary, augment internal capacity to achieve our objectives, and devise strategies for engaging external expertise when required
- Put in place arrangements for organisation-wide engagement with the process of strategy implementation, including allocation of responsibilities and accountabilities through a system of performance management
- Agree and implement revised organisation design and staffing arrangements to support flexible and responsive delivery of services and the achievement of the key objectives set out in the strategy
- Implement the agreed management and governance structures to maximise the potential of the university partnership
- Agree and implement a plan to progress the business, academic and back-office aspects of the partnership
- Further develop processes for the formal and standardised evaluation of all educational, training and other developmental interventions, including the gathering of data from key stakeholders such as students, clients and their managers

- Further develop the arrangements for the regular quality review and update of all learning materials, and put in place the processes to support other innovations required to deliver this strategy
- Identify the core messages we wish to be associated with the IPA brand and related sub-brands, and put in place processes for communicating these
- Review arrangements for marketing IPA services with a view to ensuring that we optimise communication with both existing and potential clients
- Review and enhance approaches for the regular quality review of the whole of Institute in a way that also incorporates internal quality-assurance and related processes



Key Measures of Success

Key Measures of Success

Objective 1: Provide practical support for change and development across the whole of the public service

- Specific services to help clients address challenges
- Understanding of sectoral competency development needs
- Workplace learning and other resources
- Customer survey results
- Activities to provide advice on best practice and good governance
- Numbers attending professional programmes
- Joint activities with university partner
- Budgetary performance

Objective 2: Enhance professional capacity in the public service by developing the Whitaker School of Government and Management as the leading professional development school for the Irish public service

- Number of new specialist programmes
- Numbers attending accredited programmes
- Customer and student survey results
- Joint programmes with university partner
- Professional development opportunities
- Results of independent quality reviews
- Budgetary performance

Objective 3: Contribute to the development of Irish public administration, including meeting current and future challenges, through relevant research and publishing, and by stimulating debate and dialogue

- Output from core research project
- Number of other research outputs
- Research dissemination and coverage
- Conference/seminar and network programme
- Joint activities with university partner
- Texts published and sold
- Budgetary performance
- Initiatives on corporate social responsibility

Objective 4: Develop the international activities and profile for the whole of the Institute

- Number and type of international activities across IPA
- Joint activities with university partner
- Number and type of international capacity-building projects
- Budgetary performance

Objective 5: Maintain and further develop the IPA as an efficient and financially viable organisation that can continue to deliver services within a sustainable budgetary framework

- Budget strategy and performance
- Savings achieved
- Quality of financial, management and governance processes, and management information
- Maintenance of infrastructure

Objective 6: Market our services effectively whilst further fostering a culture of innovation and quality, further developing organisational and people capacity, and leveraging a new university partnership to support strategy implementation

- People development plans
- Revised organisation design
- Staff survey
- Management and governance structures
- Nature and level of joint activity with university partner
- Results from institutional and other quality reviews
- Brand recognition as measured through customer survey
- Marketing outputs



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