



Equality Scheme for the Strategic Investment Board Limited

Drawn up in accordance with Section 75 and Schedule 9 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998

Approved by the Equality Commission on 27th February 2013

SUMMARY

This document is available in a range of formats on request. Please contact us with your requirements (see page 2 for contact details).

**Strategic Investment Board Limited
Clare House
303 Airport Road West
Belfast BT2 8ED**

www.sibni.org

Contact details

All comments, requests and queries about anything in this document should be addressed to:

Name	Julie Monahan
Title	Human Resources Manager
Address	Strategic Investment Board Limited Clare House, 303 Airport Road West Belfast BT2 8ED
Tel.	028 9081 6163
Fax	028 9081 6163
e mail	Julie.Monahan@sibni.org
Textphone	028 9042 7617
SMS	077 9230 1647

1. Section 75 duties

Under Section 75 and Schedule 9 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998, the Strategic Investment Board Limited (SIB) is required to draw up an equality scheme setting out how equality of opportunity will be promoted through the implementation of all functions carried out in Northern Ireland.

Section 75 imposes a duty to promote equality of opportunity between people in 9 categories and to have regard to the desirability of promoting good relations between people of different religious beliefs, political opinion or racial group.

The 9 categories of people are –

- those with different religious beliefs, political opinion, racial group, age, marital status and sexual orientation
- men and women generally
- people with a disability and those without
- people with dependants and those without.

SIB is committed to the fulfilment of the Section 75 duties in all areas of responsibility. Responsibility for the effective implementation of the equality scheme lies with the Chairman of the Board and the Chief Executive Officer. This document summarises our equality scheme and sets out what we intend to do to implement it.

2. About SIB

SIB is a company limited by guarantee and owned by the Office of the First Minister and Deputy First Minister (OFMDFM), financed from within the departmental expenditure limit, with a Board reporting to the First Minister and the Deputy First Minister. SIB works with NI government departments and agencies to help them achieve the delivery of major public infrastructure projects economically and efficiently. In parallel, SIB works with the private sector to inform the market of planned projects, generate confidence and stimulate market interest, thus driving competitive tension and resulting in improved value for the taxpayer.

SIB has four key responsibilities –

1. Producing the Investment Strategy for Northern Ireland (ISNI), a 10 year rolling programme for the delivery of public infrastructure.
2. Assisting the public sector to deliver large infrastructure projects and programmes of investment, by deploying advisers into key project management and advisory roles.
3. Fostering and promoting reform both in the delivery of major infrastructure and as a prerequisite for such investment, and helping to build delivery capability by encouraging the development of specialist skills and the use of innovative approaches not usually found in the public sector.
4. Since January 2011, hosting the Asset Management Unit which is charged with realising £100m from surplus assets over the period 2011-2015.

It is important to note that SIB does not deliver services directly to the public, although the advice and support which we provide clearly have significant indirect benefits to the population of Northern Ireland as a whole. SIB plays a key role in facilitating the development of the Investment Strategy for Northern Ireland (ISNI) which, together with the Programme for Government and the Budget, forms the government's overall strategic approach to carrying out its responsibilities. The promotion of equality of opportunity and good relations is central to this strategic approach.

SIB does not have primary responsibility for developing and implementing projects, although it provides extensive support to the government departments and agencies which do. Identifying and addressing the equality implications of projects is the responsibility of the government department or agency, not SIB. Similarly the monitoring of impacts of each completed project is undertaken by the responsible department or agency.

3. Equality action plan

SIB has developed an action plan to promote equality of opportunity and good relations (See Appendix 1).

The action plan has been developed on the basis of an audit of inequalities. The audit of inequalities gathered and analysed information across the Section 75 categories to identify the inequalities that exist for those affected by our policies.

4. Consultation

A commitment to full and meaningful consultation lies at the heart of our equality scheme. SIB recognises the importance of consultation on all matters relating to Section 75 duties and we will apply best practice guidelines when carrying out consultation. In particular, we will try our best to make all consultations timely, open and inclusive.

Our equality scheme contains a list of consultees (at Appendix 3) who will initially, as a matter of course, be notified of the matter being consulted upon to ensure they are aware of all consultations. Thereafter, to ensure the most effective use of our and our consultees' resources, we will take a targeted approach to consultation for those consultees that may have a particular interest in the matter being consulted upon.

We will apply the following principles when consulting –

1. We will begin as early as possible.
2. We will use different methods of consultation for different groups according to their needs – methods might include face to face meetings, advisory groups, surveys, consultative panels and Internet discussions.
3. We will consider the accessibility and format of every method of consultation we use in order to remove barriers to the consultation process.
4. We will provide training to those facilitating consultations to ensure that they have the necessary skills to communicate effectively with consultees.
5. We will ensure that consultees are provided with appropriate information on our role and our approach to the Section 75 statutory duties in all consultation documentation and at all consultation meetings.
6. We will aim to allow 12 weeks for all consultations, where possible, and longer where a consultation period includes a holiday period.
7. We will take steps to make sure there is full participation at any consultation meetings – this will include careful consideration of, among other things, the time of day, the suitability of the venue, how the meeting is run and child care arrangements.

8. We will make all relevant information available to consultees in appropriate formats to ensure meaningful consultation and ensure that we provide sufficient information so that those we consult can consider the full implications of our proposals.
9. We will provide feedback to consultees in a timely manner.

5. Assessing the impact of policies

In making any decision with respect to a policy adopted or proposed to be adopted, we will take into account any assessment and consultation carried out in relation to the policy.

SIB uses the tools of **screening** and **equality impact assessment** to assess the likely impact of a policy on the promotion of equality of opportunity and good relations.

(a) *Screening*

Screening is completed at the earliest opportunity in the policy development/review process by applying the following questions:

1. What is the likely impact on equality of opportunity for those affected by this policy, for each of the Section 75 equality categories? (minor/major/none)
2. Are there opportunities to better promote equality of opportunity for people within the Section 75 equality categories?
3. To what extent is the policy likely to impact on good relations between people of a different religious belief, political opinion or racial group? (minor/major/none)
4. Are there opportunities to better promote good relations between people of a different religious belief, political opinion or racial group?

In order to answer the screening questions, we gather evidence relating to the different needs, experiences and priorities of people in each of the Section 75 equality categories. Consideration of this evidence leads to one of the following three outcomes:

1. The policy has been 'screened in' for equality impact assessment.
2. The policy has been 'screened out' with mitigation or an alternative policy proposed to be adopted.

3. The policy has been 'screened out' without any mitigation.

Where we mitigate we will outline in the screening template the reasons to support this decision together with the proposed changes, amendments or alternative policy. Each screening template will be made available on our website and we will inform consultees of its availability.

(b) *Equality impact assessment*

If our screening concludes that the likely impact of a policy is 'major', we will normally subject the policy to an equality impact assessment. This is a thorough and systematic analysis to determine the extent of any impact of a policy upon the Section 75 categories and to determine if the impact is an adverse one. It is also an opportunity to demonstrate the likely positive outcomes of a policy and to seek ways to more effectively promote equality of opportunity and good relations.

Any equality impact assessment will be subject to consultation at the appropriate stage(s). The results of all equality impact assessments will be published on our website as soon as the process has been completed.

6. Monitoring

Monitoring can assist us to deliver better public services and continuous improvements. We monitor any adverse impact on the promotion of equality of opportunity of policies we have adopted. We are also committed to monitoring more broadly to identify opportunities to better promote equality of opportunity and good relations in line with Equality Commission guidance.

If over a two year period monitoring and evaluation show that a policy results in greater adverse impact than predicted, or if opportunities arise which would allow for greater equality of opportunity to be promoted, we will ensure that the policy is revised to achieve better outcomes for relevant equality groups.

Monitoring involves the collection, collation and analysis of data from primary and secondary sources and the commissioning of new data where necessary.

We review our monitoring information on an annual basis and include the results in our annual progress report to the Equality Commission, which is published on our website.

7. Staff training

We recognise that awareness raising and training play a crucial role in the effective implementation of our Section 75 duties. All staff have been made aware of the Equality Scheme and the duties imposed by Section 75 and we will make sure that all new staff are made aware as part of their induction. We also provide focused training for key staff within SIB who are directly engaged in taking forward the implementation of our equality scheme commitments. We evaluate the effectiveness of the training on a regular basis.

8. Access to information

SIB is committed to ensuring that the information we disseminate and the services we provide are fully accessible to all parts of the community in Northern Ireland.

To ensure equality of opportunity in accessing information, we provide information in alternative formats on request, where reasonably practicable. Alternative formats may include Easy Read, Braille, audio formats (CD, mp3 or DAISY), large print or minority languages to meet the needs of those for whom English is not their first language.

The main medium for disseminating information about the work of SIB is the website www.sibni.org which includes a link to the Investment Strategy portal. All information posted on the website is designed to be fully accessible to people with disabilities and includes the facility to search for information on specific subjects or specific geographical areas. We monitor our website content on an ongoing basis to ensure the widest possible access to information online.

9. Complaints

SIB is responsive to the views of members of the public. We will endeavour to resolve all complaints made to us in a timely manner

and will co-operate fully with any subsequent investigation by the Equality Commission.

10. Review

We will review progress on implementing our Equality Scheme every year and report to the Equality Commission. We will also undertake a thorough review of the Equality Scheme after 5 years.

Appendix 1: Equality Action Plan

(Please note that this does not form part of the approved Equality Scheme)

	Theme		Action	New or ongoing measure	Link to strategic priorities	Timescale	Desired outcomes	Performance measures
1	Awareness	1.1	Annual workshop for SIB officers on key inequalities in NI	Ongoing	1, 5	Dec 2012 Dec 2013 Dec 2014	Increased awareness of key inequalities in NI	Self evaluation by officers
		1.2	Establish an approach to raising awareness among suppliers and potential suppliers of Section 75 obligations	New	1	Jun 2013	Increased awareness among suppliers of S75 obligations	Feedback from procurers on quality of tenders in relation to S75 issues
2	Monitoring	2.1	Establish working group to consider feasibility of equality monitoring of ISNI projects and communication of results	New	1	Jun 2013	Increased information on contribution made by ISNI projects to addressing key inequalities in NI	Monitoring system established
		2.2	Evaluate current position and opportunities	New	1	Jul 2013		

	Theme		Action	New or ongoing measure	Link to strategic priorities	Timescale	Desired outcomes	Performance measures
		2.3	Report on options	New	1	Aug 2013		
		2.4	Implement agreed option	New	1	Sep 2013 onwards		
3	Communication	3.1	Communicate monitoring information	New	1	Apr 2014 onwards	Increased awareness among government departments, agencies, S75 organisations and public regarding contribution made by ISNI projects to addressing key inequalities in NI	Feedback from recipients of information

Strategic Priorities (for information)

1. To advise the Executive in relation to the formulation and implementation of its programme of major investment projects.
2. To accelerate the delivery of major, sustainable infrastructure projects.
3. To obtain value for money for infrastructure investment.
4. To make best use of existing assets and dispose of those that are surplus to requirements.
5. To further develop the Company to ensure it continues to be capable of achieving its objectives.