Northern Ireland Civil Service

Senior Civil Service Development Strategy 2008-2011

Central Personnel Group

February 2009

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1. Management Summary

1.1 Within the Northern Ireland Civil Service (NICS), Senior Civil Servants have a pivotal role in providing the leadership, vision and drive, combined with core Civil Service values of integrity, impartiality and equity needed to achieve corporate and departmental objectives. The continued need to develop members of the Senior Civil Service (SCS), not only to ensure that its leaders have the skills and behaviours that will support them in driving reform, but also in demonstrating from the top the importance of continuous learning and development throughout a career, is paramount.

1.2 A wide range of research has been undertaken to review and update the SCS Development Strategy (section 3) within the context of the Skills Strategy for Government, Professional Skills for Government and the overarching NICS Development Strategy.

1.3 In developing the strategy, development needs have been identified as applying to *grade* (including those at entry level), *role* and *potential*, with the key recommendations centred on:

Grade Based Development
- A mandatory and more systematic approach to induction for all entrants including pre-appointment activities, induction briefing within 2 months, review discussion after 3 months, core induction programme within 6-9 months and provision of a mentor;
- A new core leadership programme for existing G5s;
- Continuing use of the National School of Government's Top Management Programme for G3s;
- Financial Management and People Management elective programmes.

<u>Role Based Development</u>

- Identification of needs and development of appropriate solutions for SCS members within Policy Delivery, Operational Delivery and Corporate Services Delivery career groups, led by respective Heads of Profession.

<u>Potential Based Development</u>

- A more corporate, systematic and transparent process of career management within which both individual and corporate needs can be met, together with more guidance for an individual on their chosen career path;
- Introduction of a programme of talent management.

1.4   Heads of Profession will have a key role in setting professional skills standards for their members, working with departments to understand supply and demand and to influence professional development and career progression.

1.5   Funding requirements and an indicative implementation timetable have been identified (section 6 and annex 1 respectively).

2. Introduction

2.1 The Senior Civil Service (SCS) was established in the mid 1990's following recommendations in "*The Civil Service: Taking Forward Continuity and Change*" report as a highly professional group of senior advisers and managers to work closely with Ministers.

2.2 Within the Northern Ireland Civil Service (NICS), Senior Civil Servants have a pivotal role in providing the leadership, vision and drive, combined with core civil service values of integrity, impartiality and equity needed to achieve corporate and departmental objectives. Members of the SCS support Ministers in the design of policies and the delivery of services to meet the needs of the people of Northern Ireland. The range of SCS activities is extremely varied but is likely to include:

- Business and Strategic Planning
  - Leading the identification of strategic options for the achievement of key organizational goals;
  - Overseeing the development and implementation of strategic initiatives and plans within a significant policy or operational area.
- Leadership and Implementing Change
  - Using leadership, motivation, communication and influencing skills to promote understanding and agreement across a broad range of stakeholders;
  - Contributing to the development and delivery of the NICS reform agenda.
  - Leading a programme of strategic and/or organizational change within a multi-disciplinary organization;

- Playing a key role in the development, interpretation and implementation of local, national and European legislative and regulatory requirements.

- Evidence Based Policy
  - Developing evidence based policy solutions to major, multifaceted problems, taking account of strategic direction, stakeholder views and the political environment;
  - Ensuring regular reviews of policies, challenging inherited thinking and proposing new policy directions where needed.

- Project Management
  - Providing direction for and managing significant projects in key policy areas;
  - Management of a significant multi-disciplinary group operating within a complex and challenging policy or operational area.

- Resource (including people) Management
  - Developing, guiding and supporting individual and group performance to ensure operational targets are fully met;
  - Promoting an open, honest and inclusive environment in which staff can contribute effectively to NICS business needs and to their full potential;
  - Determining resource requirements and assuming overall responsibility for the effective and appropriate acquisition, allocation, monitoring and control of resources.

2.3 A recent Fore*sight* report[1] on the future leadership of the civil service has concluded that "*we are at the beginning of a paradigm shift in leadership that could profoundly impact on the way the SCS operates over the next decade*". The challenge of getting better at delivering results against complex society, economic and political problems will require the SCS to recast themselves as system leaders, collaborating, persuading and learning alongside other organisations and the general public. An Ipsos Mori report has stated that:

[Future] leaders in the SCS cannot rely on traditional levers and bilateral relationships to achieve the outcomes they and the general

> *public want. Instead, they will have to embrace new forms of*
> *leadership to become better strategists, connectors and learners.*

2.4   The context within which the SCS operates is changing rapidly – the challenges of devolution, pressure to deliver better services and efficiencies, and implementation of reform projects that change the way in which our people work are a few of the key drivers of change. Recruitment to the SCS is now mainly via external competition. These, together with other drivers that impact on SCS skill needs are outlined in annex 2.

2.5   A key factor influencing the SCS strategy is the Professional Skills for Government Framework (*Figure 1*) which was introduced across the SCS from April 2006. Individual SCS members are required to self-assess against the framework as part of their mid-year review and agree development needs with their line manager.

Figure 1 Professional Skills for Government Framework
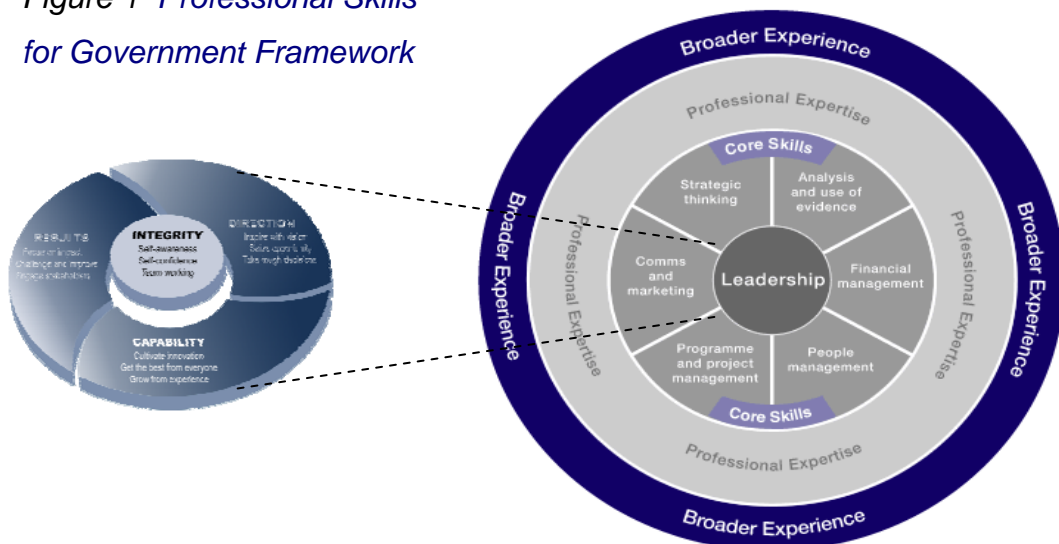
2.6   Leadership and Core Skills are applicable across <u>all</u> SCS posts, while the Professional Expertise layer is job specific. The framework promotes broader experience across policy delivery, operational delivery and corporate service delivery posts. While depth of specialist

knowledge is vital, as individuals progress to senior levels of the Civil Service, breadth of experience becomes increasingly important. This broader experience could be gained within the service or in other sectors.

2.7   Working to the highest standards of integrity, equity and impartiality, Senior Civil Servants are required during the course of their duties to exhibit and utilize all of the relevant attributes and behaviors detailed in the Professional Skills for Government framework.

2.8   Against this background, the civil service has recognised the continued need to develop members of the SCS, not only to ensure that its leaders have the skills and behaviours that will support them in driving reform, but also in demonstrating from the top the importance of continuous learning and development throughout a career. The current strategy for developing the Senior Civil Service was established in 2003, with a revamped performance management system that put particular emphasis on considering development needs. Given the changing context and environment within which the SCS operates the need to review and refresh the strategy is clear.

2.9   Positioned within the overall framework of the NICS Training and Development Strategy (2006-2009), this strategy further defines the needs of the SCS, in recognition that they are a key group in delivering public services and supporting Ministers.

2.10   While research evidence indicated that the Professional Skills for Government framework is a sound basis from which to identify the skills and behaviours needed to perform within the SCS, feedback indicated that members find the framework less than user-friendly, the language confusing, and a perceived disconnect within the four areas in the leadership element. Further work to add clarity and embed Professional Skills for Government within the SCS is required. Work

currently in progress by Government Skills (the Sector Skills Council for central Government) to refine the framework should assist.

CPG to further consider the application of Professional Skills for Government within the NICS, including contextualising for local application.

3.   Evidence Base

3.1   In devising the strategy, a number of sources of evidence have been drawn on, including:

- Focus groups with SCS members;
- One-to-one discussions with Permanent Secretaries;
- Consultation with Personnel Directors Group;
- Summaries of SCS self assessment against PSfG;
- Government Skills Survey (Northern Ireland evidence base);
- Outputs from Government Skills Scenario Planning Workshop (designed to elicit future needs); and
- Benchmarking against other public and private sector organisations.

Summaries of the main outputs are attached at annex 3.

3.2   Reference has also been made to the UK-wide "*Building Professional Skills for Government*" strategy, produced by Government Skills, and the associated Northern Ireland Action Plan to ensure that the SCS Development Strategy aligns with the commitment given by the Head of the Service to the UK-wide strategy.

3.3   Against a background of Comprehensive Spending Review efficiencies, a balance needs to be struck against meeting identified development needs and budget constraints.   This is further considered in section 6 below.

4. Segmenting the Market

4.1 There are three main ways that the SCS corporate development market could be segmented:

- By grade, with development focused on the needs defined at G5 and G3 level (including those at entry level);
- By role, with development focused on the skills needed to deliver and build capability in any discipline or department;
- By potential, with development focused on those who could advance to higher levels or take on more challenging roles at their current level.

4.2 To date, the main focus has been on grade based and to a lesser extent role based development. However, to provide the comprehensive coverage required to support transformation of the civil service and deliver reforms, a combination of all three is required. As outlined below, provision will be made across the three areas, providing the ability for tailored development to key groups of staff. This approach will also allow departments to take the lead where the skill need is not universal.

4.3 The provision of corporate development will concentrate on those issues where there is a common agreement that there is value in all members of the SCS being trained across corporate boundaries.

4.4 Heads of Profession will have a key role in identifying development needs within their profession, including SCS needs.

4.5 In defining and developing SCS opportunities, the NICS commitment to "*common commissioning for common actions*" should explored, in particular with the other devolved administrations. The potential for accreditation of SCS solutions should also be explored.

5. Development Opportunities

5.1 Corporate Induction

5.1.1 Those progressing to the SCS are
either drawn from existing civil
servants or direct recruits. In either
case, appointment to the SCS
represents a significant step-change
for most people.   The need for a
well-structured induction programme
that sets the standard for and expectation of the SCS was identified as
an '*overwhelming priority'* from the evidence base. In the case of direct
recruits, recognition was given to an additional knowledge requirement
on civil service structures and culture.

5.1.2 Induction relates to an individual's specific role and knowledge of their
division/directorate/department (which will continue to be the
responsibility of line management and departmental personnel), and a
corporate introduction to the NICS to raise awareness on corporate
issues and set an expectation of behaviours and values for SCS (which
should be addressed centrally).

5.1.3 Drawing on the output from focus groups, an indicative framework for
corporate induction has been developed (annex 4). This includes a
virtual SCS handbook (intranet page with links to relevant information),
allocation of a mentor, briefing session for all new entrants within 2
months of entry, a review discussion after 3 months, and a core
induction programme within 6-12 months. Both those promoted from
within (stepping up) and direct recruits (stepping in) should complete
the corporate induction - while there is the potential for some
duplication for those stepping up, this approach will ensure a common
baseline helping to establish corporacy and a network for mutual
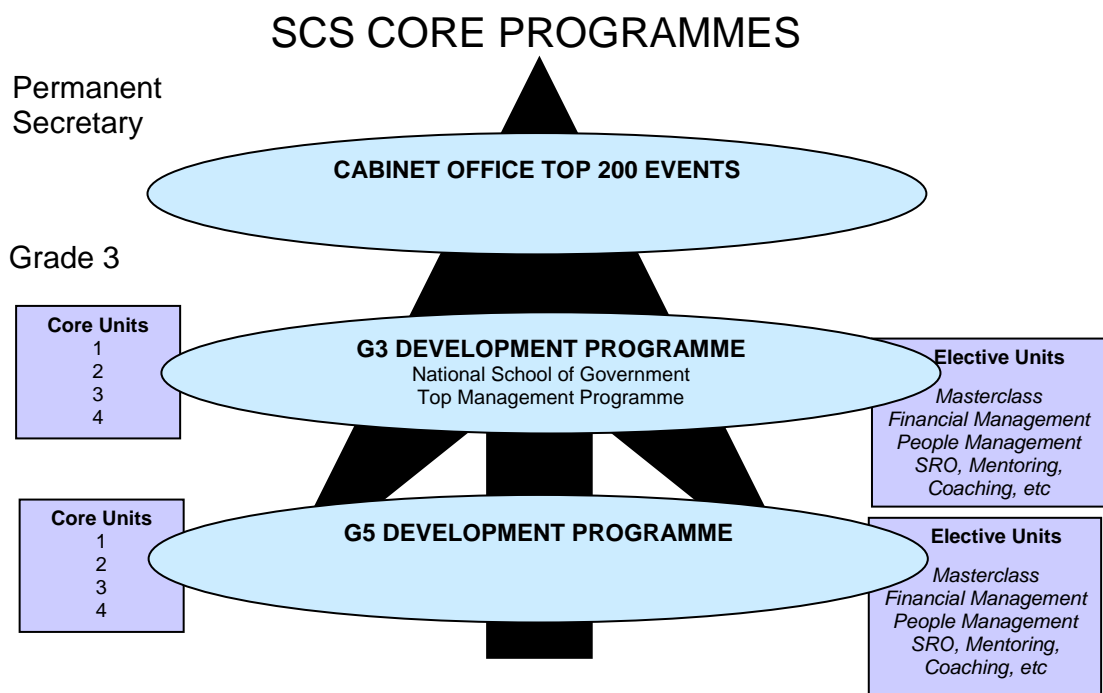support.

5.1.4   All new SCS members (both those stepping up and stepping in) will be allocated a mandatory mentor from outside their own line management for support during their first 12 months in the SCS. This role will specifically focus on passing on experience, provision of advice on culture and practices and expose new members to the wider organisation and SCS community.

5.1.5   The core induction programme will take the form of a linear case study to be completed in groups, with various scenarios designed to reflect the challenges faced by SCS members. This will be supplemented by interactive sessions from key stakeholders, such as the Head of the Civil Service, Permanent Secretaries, Special Advisors and representatives from relevant support functions and professions. A developmental element will also be built into the core programme to assist identification of future needs.

5.1.6   Responsibility for induction of existing SCS members moving to a new post or new department will remain the responsibility of line management.

> A modular based corporate induction framework for new SCS members will be developed which will baseline NICS expectations. Attendance will be mandatory for all new members to the SCS (both those stepping up and those stepping in).
>
> All new SCS members will be allocated a mentor during their first 12 months in post to help ease their induction.

5.2 Grade based development

5.2.1 Grade based skill levels are defined within the Professional Skills for Government Framework at Deputy Director and Director General Level. In NICS terms this translates into G3/5 and Permanent Secretary respectively. Clearly the needs at G3 and G5 level are different and, even within these grades, the needs of new and experienced staff vary. In line with the general approach adopted by the NICS, opportunities will be provided at entry level, together with elective training where a common SCS need has been identified. Building on the approach within the NICS Training and Development Strategy 2006-2009, and drawing on the evidence base, the following core programmes will be available:

SCS CORE PROGRAMMES

Permanent
Secretary

CABINET OFFICE TOP 200 EVENTS

Grade 3

Core Units
1
2
3
4

G3 DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMME
National School of Government
Top Management Programme

Elective Units

Masterclass
Financial Management
People Management
SRO, Mentoring,
Coaching, etc

Core Units
1
2
3
4

G5 DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMME

Elective Units

Masterclass
Financial Management
People Management
SRO, Mentoring,
Coaching, etc

Leadership & Core Skills

5.2.2 Core and elective programmes should reflect the leadership and core skills elements of the Professional Skills for Government framework. Leadership is one of the pivotal roles of the SCS and the evidence base indicates it is also a priority skill need, both now and in the future.

Leadership sits at the heart of the Professional Skills for Government framework. Leaders are expected to demonstrate pace, passion, pride and professionalism in the leadership they provide; they also need to inspire those qualities in the organization - clearly Senior Civil Servants need to be role models in demonstrating these qualities.

5.2.3 Every Senior Civil Servant needs to have certain core skills to work effectively, including those engaged for their professional and technical expertise such as doctors, architects, engineers, etc. These core skills have been defined as:

- Strategic Thinking
- Programme & Project Management
- Analysis & Use of Evidence
- People Management
- Financial Management
- Communications & Marketing

In addition, ICT skills and an awareness of the potential for using technology amongst the SCS cadre have been highlighted as important enablers to support reform.

5.2.4 Core programmes provide the opportunity to communicate key messages across the SCS and to set the corporate expectation in terms of skills, attitudes and behaviours. Consequently, attendance at the core entry level programmes will be mandatory.

5.2.5 The Core Leadership programme at G5 level will be for existing SCS members and will largely reflect the contents of the core Induction programme, but remove those elements specific to new entrants and place a greater emphasis on capitalising on experience. Focus groups highlighted the lack of clarity amongst existing SCS members regarding leadership expectations and 'political awareness'. The Core G5 Leadership programme will provide the opportunity to clearly articulate

leadership expectations, develop collective skills and behaviours and set clear expectations. New SCS members, who have attended the Core Induction programme, would not be expected also to attend the G5 Core Leadership programme. The need for the Core Leadership programme will therefore diminish over time.

5.2.6   Evidence suggests the National School of Government's Top Management Programme will continue to meet the corporate development needs of the G3 cadre.

5.2.7   Across the PSfG core skills, priority needs were identified in respect of Financial Management and People Management. Financial Management should include base level understanding of key financial information, forecasting, monitoring, commercial awareness and use of financial data as key influencer of Ministers/other stakeholders and setting direction for the organisation. Current elective programmes should be reviewed and where necessary new programmes developed over the medium term. Research suggested people management is inconsistently delivered across the SCS. A new elective programme should be developed over the medium term to include management styles, coaching, managing poor performance and use of workforce planning. The relevant Heads of Profession should be engaged in the development process.

Corporate core programmes, together with elective modules, will be provided at G5 and G3 levels to address leadership and core skills.

G5 Leadership programme will be for existing G5s and will reflect the content of the Core Induction programme but with greater emphasis on capitalising on experience and political awareness.

The National School of Government's Top Management Programme will continue to meet the needs of the G3 cadre.

Current elective SCS Financial Management programmes should be reviewed and where necessary updated to meet identified needs over the medium term.

A new elective Leading through People Management programme should be developed over the medium term.

5.3 Role based Development

5.3.1 Everyone in the Civil Service, including SCS members, require some professional skills to do their job, whether they work in policy development, operational delivery, corporate services, or provide expert professional advice (for example, scientists, economists and statisticians).   Provision of this type of role based development, which is focused on the skills needed to deliver and build capability in any discipline, will be provided as outlined below. Heads of Profession will have a key role in the development of appropriate solutions.

Policy Delivery

5.3.2 Under the auspices of the Policy Delivery Head of Profession, work is in progress through the Policy Champions Network to define and develop a new suite of policy delivery programmes in line with National Occupational Standards. This includes an audit of policy skills across

the NICS which will inform SCS needs for those within this career grouping.

Operational Delivery

5.3.3 Work is at an early stage in defining the needs of those within the Operational Delivery community. The Head of Profession will work closely with Whitehall counterparts in defining skill needs in this area. It is recommended that SCS needs are identified as part of this process and appropriate interventions identified.

Corporate Services Delivery

5.3.4 <u>Finance</u>

During 2007, an exercise was carried out by Central Finance Group in the Department of Finance and Personnel to identify skill needs across the finance community, including those of SCS members such as Financial Directors.

New recruits to Finance Director posts are required to have a professional accountancy qualification. Those at G3 level must either have a professional qualification or be supported by direct reports with a professional qualification.

A series of financial management Masterclasses has recently been delivered to improve general finance skills across the NICS. The needs of both finance specialists and SCS members generally should continue to be reviewed through the Head of Profession.

5.3.5 <u>Human Resources</u>

Alongside the introduction of HRConnect, much work was carried out to identify and address skills needs across the HR community, including a

three year HR Leadership Development Programme for SCS members with HR responsibilities, such as Directors of Personnel. The development needs of the SCS working in HR will continue to be addressed through the evolution ad refinement of this programme.

In line with corporate NICS policy, SCS members with HR responsibilities have been encouraged to obtain Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development (CIPD) membership.

5.3.6 <u>ICT</u>

The number of ICT specific SCS posts is quite small and their needs are addressed through the industry standard "Skills for the Information Age Framework" (at level 6-7).   The NICS will continue to look to the ICT Academy to meet professional needs for these staff.

Other Professional Skills

5.3.7 For other professions, such as medical, legal and engineering, the responsibility for identifying the need for the acquisition of professional/technical SCS skills and securing appropriate provision will fall to Heads of Profession.

Heads of Profession are to accept and deliver on a substantial new set of accountabilities, setting professional skills standards for their members, working with departments to understand supply and demand and to influence professional career progression, supporting their members in professional development, and linking attainment to standards and qualifications recognised in the wider labour market. The specific needs of SCS members within the relevant profession should be examined as part of this process.

5.3.8 SCS members will continue to source specific training to meet individual needs. Prior approval for such development should be

sought from their line manager, including associated funding arrangements.

Broader Experience

5.3.9 For SCS members (and those aspiring to the SCS), both depth and breadth of experience are important. Deep professional knowledge is valuable, but as individuals progress in their civil service career, breadth of experience becomes increasingly important.

5.3.10 Heads of Profession will lead work to define what broader experience looks like in each professional context. This will include engaging with colleagues in Whitehall (through existing networks), devolved administrations and with the Irish Civil Service.

5.3.11 Opportunities for secondment, either through the Interchange Scheme or within the European Union, will continue to be available to SCS members who wish to broaden their experience outside the NICS. SCS members looking to broaden their experience through this route can submit a candidate proforma outlining details of the experience they would like to gain.

> Heads of Profession to lead work to define broader experience within the context of their profession.
>
> The NICS remains committed to the requirement for SCS members to gain broader experience across career groups to gain breadth of experience

5.4 Potential Based Development

Career Development

5.4.1 While there is a widely recognised career management policy in place with the expectation that individuals will be considered for a change of roles every 4-5 years, focus groups indicated the perception is that it doesn't happen in many cases and concerns were expressed that individual needs were not sufficiently taken into account. This points to the need for a more corporate, systematic and transparent process within which both individual and corporate needs can be met. This process should include more engagement by senior SCS management, including Permanent Secretaries. The desire for an opportunity for an individual to discuss their career pathway was highlighted.

Talent Management

5.4.2 Research consistently indicated that high performance was not well managed across the SCS, with concern expressed that the current system "equalises down" with no incentive to perform. There was generally strong support for implementing a more structured approach to talent management commencing at the G7 feeder grade level. Concern was expressed that in the absence of a better process, the brightest and best could be lost. Concerns were also expressed, however, about the risk that a talent management scheme could be unfairly applied, highlighting the need for a comprehensive awareness raising process and a transparent, objective and potentially independent assessment of performance, potential and leadership capability if a talent management process were to gain the support of SCS members.

5.4.3 It is recognised that building potential for the SCS starts at the feeder grades and work is already under way to complement the intervention at SCS level, including a new G6/7 Development Programme and a review of the Graduate Entry Scheme.

5.4.4 Alignment of the Core Competence Framework below SCS with Professional Skills for Government from April 2008 is a key component in ensuring feeder grade development dovetails with SCS skill needs.

5.4.5 Research suggested there has been a recent upward trend of operational activity into the SCS, particularly at Grade 5 level. In addition to the impact on Grade 5s, this also results in a denuding of responsibility from G6/7. This suggests a need to re-empower the feeder grades and it is recommended that CAL's G6/7 Development Programme is reviewed to ensure it is an enabler for this. The new Core Induction and Core G5 leadership programme also provide opportunities to seek to reverse this trend.

CPG to review the current career management process with a view to establishing a more corporate, systematic and transparent process within which both individual and corporate needs can be met. The opportunity to provide more career path guidance should also be explored.

A Talent Management scheme for the SCS should be developed and introduced by 2010.

The new corporate G6/7 programme should be reviewed to ensure it empowers G6/7s with a view to reversing the trend of operational activity migrating to SCS level.

6. Resource Requirement

6.1   Implementation of the strategy will be dependent on the provision of resources. With the exception of Masterclasses (where central funding is provided), SCS development at an individual level has been funded from departmental budgets and this should continue to be the case.

6.2   However, there will be development costs in respect of new programmes (i.e.: Induction, Core G5 leadership, People Management and Financial Management). As the Centre for Applied Learning has moved to hard charging, one-off funding in relation to programme development will be required.

6.3   Discussion with Deloitte (CAL's framework contract partner for SCS programmes) has identified the following <u>indicative</u> cost estimates based on agreed rates:

- Induction (3 day)
  Development: £13,500
  Delivery: £2,725
- Core G5 Leadership (3 day)
  Development: £13,500
  Delivery: £2,725
- People Management - elective (1 ½ day)
  Development: £6,750
  Delivery: £1,375
- Financial Management - elective (1 ½ day)
  Development: £6,750
  Delivery: £1,375

On this basis, **a budget requirement of £40,500 is estimated for developing the new programmes**. Assuming a minimum of 8 attendees per programme, delivery costs compare favourably to the

National School of Government (around £465* per place for induction and corporate G5 leadership compared to £2,000 per place for NSG's Basecamp; and £233* per place for people and financial management electives in comparison to £975 per place for similar NSG programmes).

> Provision of central funding (estimate £41k) should be made available to cover development costs in respect of new programmes.
>
> Departments should continue to fund attendance by individual SCS members on relevant programmes.

7. Implementation Priorities

7.1 Faced with limited resources, decisions need to be made and the prioritisation of development needs is critical. It is recommended that implementation is phased over the short and medium term of the strategy in the following order of priority:

- Induction and G5 core leadership solutions will have the widest impact and were consistently identified as the greatest priority. As such it is recommended these are sourced, designed and delivered first;

- Career Management is an existing feature of SCS development, and the need to provide a more corporate, systematic and transparent process is clear and should be addressed immediately;

- Core Financial Management and People Management Skills should be addressed as an important but lower priority basis.

- Talent Management will be a new feature in the portfolio of development opportunities. Given the potential equality issues and the need to establish a robust and accepted scheme, it is recommended that careful consideration is

- given to its introduction and therefore it should be developed over a longer term, with a view to implementation by 2010.

7.2   An indicative timetable is included in annex 1, together with identification of lead responsibilities.

SUMMARY OF RECOMMENDATIONS

No.	Recommendation	Lead Responsibility	Timescale
1.	CPG to further consider the application of Professional Skills for Government within the NICS, including contextualising for local application	CPG	By March 2009
2.	A modular based corporate induction framework for new SCS members will be developed which will baseline NICS expectations. Attendance will be mandatory for all new members to the SCS (both those stepping up and those stepping in).	CAL	By March 2009
3.	All new SCS members will be allocated a mentor during their first 12 months in post to help ease their induction.	CPG/CAL	Immediate
4.	Corporate Core Programmes, together with elective modules, will be provided at G5 and G3 levels to address leadership and core skills.	CAL	By June 2009
5.	G5 Leadership programme will be for existing G5s and will reflect the content of the Core Induction programme but with greater emphasis on capitalising on experience and political awareness.	CPG/CAL	By Sept 2009
6.	The National School of Government's Top Management Programme will continue to meet the needs of the G3 cadre.	CAL	Immediate
7.	Current elective SCS Financial Management programmes should be reviewed and where necessary updated to meet identified needs over the medium term.	Finance HOP/ CAL	By June 2009
8.	A new elective Leading through People Management programme should be developed over the medium term.	CAL	By Dec 2009
9.	Heads of Profession are to accept and deliver on a substantial new set of accountabilities, setting professional skills standards for their members, working with departments to understand supply and demand and to influence professional	HOPs	Immediate (on-going)

No.	Recommendation	Lead Responsibility	Timescale
	career progression, supporting their members in professional development, and linking attainment to standards and qualifications recognised in the wider labour market. The specific needs of SCS members within the relevant profession should be examined as part of this process.		
10.	Heads of Profession to lead work to define what broader experience within the context of their profession.	HOPs	Immediate (on-going)
11.	CPG to review the current career management process with a view to establishing a more corporate, systematic and transparent process within which both individual and corporate needs can be met. The opportunity to provide more career path guidance should also be explored.	CPG	Immediate
12.	A Talent Management scheme should be developed and introduced by 2010.	CPG	By April 2010
13.	The new corporate G6/7 programme should be reviewed to ensure it empowers G6/7s with a view to reversing the trend of operational activity migrating to SCS level.	CAL	By March 2009
14.	Provision of central funding should be made available to cover development costs in respect of new programmes.	PSG/CFG	Immediate
15.	Departments should continue to fund attendance by individual SCS members on relevant programmes.	Depts	Immediate (on-going)

Drivers Influencing SCS Skills Needs

Devolution / Programme for Government

A1.1   Devolution was restored to the Northern Ireland Assembly on Tuesday 8 May 2007 following the election of a four-party Executive of 12 ministers. The Executive's over-arching aim is to build a peaceful, fair and prosperous society in Northern Ireland, with respect for the rule of law and where everyone can enjoy a better quality of life now and in years to come. To ensure that Government is clearly focused on achieving that aim, the Executive has set out in the Programme for Government five key strategic and interdependent priorities as follows:

- Growing a Dynamic, Innovative Economy

- Promote Tolerance, Inclusion and Health and Well-Being

- Protect and Enhance Our Environment and Natural Resources

- Invest to Build Our Infrastructure

- Deliver Modern High Quality and Efficient Public Services

The Programme for Government highlights the key goals and actions the Executive will take to drive forward the priority areas. It includes a detailed Public Service Agreement Framework which sets out the actions and targets departments will take in support of the Executive's priorities.   Ensuring the SCS has the skills and experience to support ministers in the delivery of the Programme for Government is vital if targets and objectives are to be achieved.

Comprehensive Spending Review

A1.2   On 9 October 2007 the Chancellor of the Exchequer announced the outcome of the UK wide Comprehensive Spending Review which set out the level of resources the NI Executive would receive from Treasury over the period 2008-09 to 2010-11. The growth in the level of available resources will be less than in previous spending reviews highlighting the need for Northern Ireland Departments to deliver services more efficiently and to focus on those areas which bring most benefit to the people of Northern Ireland.

Public Sector & Civil Service Reform

A1.3 The NICS has been engaged on a driving forward a major programme of Public Service and Civil Service reform focussed on putting the priority front line services first, building capability and embracing diversity. The SCS have a key role in providing the leadership to ensure reform is delivered successfully.

Northern Ireland Investment Strategy

A1.4 The Northern Ireland Investment Strategy 2008-2018 sets out the framework for the creation of a sustainable 21st century infrastructure. It identifies priority areas for investment in the years ahead and is intended to assist government and its private sector partners to plan ahead for the challenge of delivering the largest ever investment programme. In addition to improvements in the infrastructure, (such as transport networks, schools and healthcare estate), the Investment Strategy seeks to build opportunities to promote social inclusion and equality of opportunity into the procurement of infrastructure programmes. The Investment Strategy recognises that co-operation with the South will help ensure more efficient planning and joined-up delivery of key projects, resulting in better value for money, economies of scale in public investment and better deals from financial markets.

Northern Ireland Skills Strategy

A1.5 In achieving its aim of growing a dynamic, innovative economy the Executive has recognized the need to raise the skills level of the whole workforce; to help deliver high productivity and increased competitiveness; and to secure Northern Ireland's future in a global marketplace. The Northern Ireland Skills Strategy sets out a framework for raising skill levels in partnership with employers and their representative bodies; individuals and trade unions; training and education providers; the community and voluntary sector and Government departments and agencies in order to deliver on a long term vision for skills in Northern Ireland.

A1.6 ### Government Skills Strategy

Government Skills published the Skills Strategy for the sector on 1 April 2008. Called 'Building Professional Skills for Government – a strategy for delivery',

the document lays out clearly the priorities for action on skills in government over a three-year period to 2011. It sets out a programme of work, with the PSG competency framework at its core, which will provide staff with clearer professional career paths, improved access to accredited skills and improved mobility prospects within government and beyond.

A1.7 <u>External Recruitment</u>

Recruitment to the SCS is mainly via external recruitment. Internal candidates compete with external candidates through a publicly advertised open competition, the latter often having little or no prior experience of the Civil Service structures and culture.

<u>Diversity</u>

A1.8 In order to provide a high quality service to the people of Northern Ireland the NICS needs to recruit, retain and promote the best available people. The NICS aims to foster a culture which encourages every member of staff to develop his or her full potential and which rewards achievement. Creating a working environment where individual differences are valued and respected is key to enable all staff to give of their best and to respond more effectively to the needs of the people we serve. The NICS has, therefore, adopted a twin approach to diversity, namely:-

➢ Internally – to create and maintain a working environment where everyone has a right to equality of opportunity and individual differences are valued and respected; and

➢ Externally – to take steps towards making the NICS workforce more representative of the community by attracting a more diverse applicant pool for advertised posts.

The SCS have a key role in ensuring the commitment to diversity is embedded within the culture of the NICS.

Evidence Base Summary

A3.1 <u>SCS Focus Groups</u>

Five focus groups, involving a range of G3s and G5s were undertaken, facilitated by CAL's SCS delivery partner, Deloitte. Forty SCS members, representing around 17% of the SCS, participated. One focus group was held for induction, one for G3 needs and 3 for G5 needs (one for each PSfG career group). Due to the time constraints and numbers involved, resulting data is largely qualitative rather than quantitative. Feedback across all groups was very consistent.

The main findings were:
- Induction was identified as an "overwhelming priority" - the need for a structured, consistent programme to address corporacy, expectations of SCS members and political awareness was identified - it was felt a major opportunity was currently being missed. Focus groups identified the need for an SCS "virtual handbook", induction mentor, briefing session for all new entrants shortly after appointment, review meeting with CPG after 3 months, and core induction programme within 6-9 months;
- Broad agreement that Professional Skills for Government is a sound basis from which to identify skills and behaviours, but with concerns on user friendliness, inconsistent understanding and difficulties in contextualising to NICS environment;
- A lack of clarity regarding the leadership role in the SCS, together with a lack of 'political nous'; a requirement for a series of electives on individual leadership competencies (incl stakeholder management, emotional intelligence & self awareness, coaching/ mentoring, influencing, leading high performance teams,networking)
- Collective development of boards and senior management teams;
- High priority needs for Strategic Thinking (with recommendation to address via core induction & leadership programme) Financial Management & People Management skills;
- Medium priority needs for Programme & Project Management & Communication & Marketing skills;

- Perception that Career Management doesn't happen in many cases and suspicions that this is not done with the individual in mind (widely perceived as 'horse trading' at Perm Sec level); Desire for more guidance on career paths (discussion on 'line of sight')
- Consistent feedback that SCS does not manage high performance and concerns that current system 'equalises down' with no incentive to perform; disconnect between performance, reward and promotion;
- Acceptance of need for talent management tempered by concerns on risk of being unfairly applied (facilitator of 'jobs for the boys')

Deloitte consultants concluded the findings suggest the strategy should:
- Provide clarity around corporate expectations of SCS members distinct from their role-specific needs;
- Determine whether expectations on all members of the SCS should be the same in relation to leadership and core skills, or whether there should be defined differences between technical/professional and generalist management roles; and
- Determine where the development strategy sits within wider HR practices and strengthen links between recruitment, performance management, development and career progression as all evidence indicates this being a fundamental indicator of delivery.

A3.2 Permanent Secretaries Discussions

There was a reasonably consensus view across Permanent Secretaries and agreement on the following:
- There is a pressing need for a more structured Induction programme that would set expectations for new SCS members. The SCS Basecamp model was generally supported - with the addition of a specific module for new entrants;
- Agreement that PSfG meets NICS needs, but that further work to embed its use is required; In particular its use for recruitment needs to be clearly defined;
- There were no obvious gaps in current skills across the G5 and G3 cadre, but there was a need to raise political awareness (e.g.: structures and responsibilities) and a need to be proactive in

keeping in touch with policy and procedural developments in Whitehall, other devolved administrations and Irish Civil Service;

- Agreement that a more corporate and systematic approach to career management is required, with more proactive involvement from individual Permanent Secretaries and PSG collectively;
- Agreement that a talent management programme should be established but recognition of potential issues that would require an open and transparent process.

On the question of Permanent Secretary development, there were two camps - one that Permanent Secretaries should continue to look after their own needs, and the other view being that there was a need for a more corporate approach, including re-examining the role of a Permanent Secretary, PSG's role, and using high calibre speakers to engage with and challenge the group.

A3.3 Personnel Directors Group

An outline of the emerging themes of the strategy was presented to PDG at their April 2008 meeting and members were invited to offer preliminary views.

Members were in agreement on the approach and main emerging themes which were:
- A more formal induction, addressing the needs of direct recruits and setting baseline expectations on entry to the SCS;
- Grade 5 and 3 core and elective programmes, including the need to refresh of existing core programmes and ensure alignment with Professional Skills for Government;
- A more structured approach Career Management, including systematic exposure to different career areas combined with a more corporate approach by PSG;
- A more proactive approach to Talent management/Succession Planning;
- Simplification and improved marketing of Professional Skills for Government;
- Preparation for entry to senior management – Grade 6/Grade7 leadership development programmes;

- Positioning of Coaching and Mentoring within the range of development options;
- Value of Secondments/Interchange, with improved promotion to encourage more uptake.

PDG members encouraged benchmarking against private as well as public sector and identified potential for some read across to the current review of graduate SO recruitment.

A3.4 SCS self assessment against PSfG

As part of their performance management framework, SCS members are required to complete a self assessment against the Professional Skills for Government framework. Analysis of the 40% who returned their summaries, the following needs have been identified:

Leadership	38.3 %	Financial Management	27.7 %
Programme & Project		Communications & Marketing	19.0 %
Management	34.0 %	People Management	12.8 %
Strategic Thinking	32.0 %	Analysis & Use of Evidence	11.7 %

A3.5 Government Skills Survey Northern Ireland Evidence Base

As part of its primary research on skills gaps within the central government sector, Government Skills undertook surveys of both employers and employees in the various regions and at various grade bands.   The Northern Ireland report (Jan 2008) indicates that the scope and speed of change affecting the Northern Ireland public sector has major ongoing skills implications, not only in terms of managing the change process itself but also in terms of supporting the new political structures and managing the new public administration system to deliver better public services. The report identifies leadership and strategic thinking as the priority SCS skill needs.

A3.6 Government Skills Scenario Planning Workshop

The Government Skills scenario planning exercise, which formed part of its primary research, considered future changes in the UK Government sector and was designed to facilitate identification of common future skill needs. A series of workshops were held with employer and stakeholder representatives, including one in Northern Ireland.   This workshop identified

three possible scenarios by 2020 which envisaged civil servants as "new generalists", "strategists & connectors" or "policymakers & funders". While scenarios are not a prediction of the future, they aim to assist in exploring possibilities that the future might hold. Analysis of each scenario identified the following common likely skill requirements –
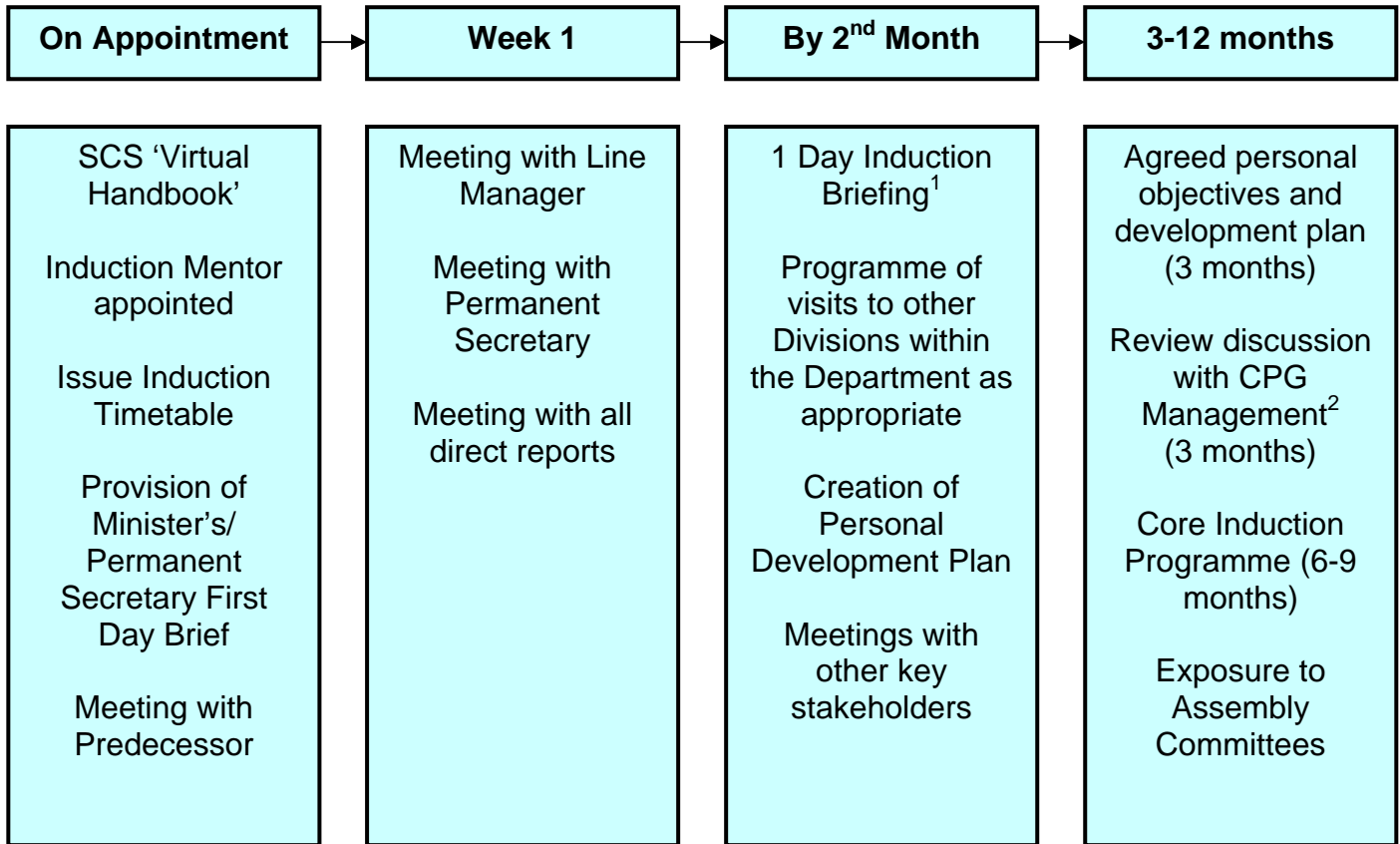
- Financial Management
- Leadership
- Programme & Project Management
- Collaboration

- Stakeholder Engagement
- Business Planning
- Procurement
- Policy & operational delivery and people management.

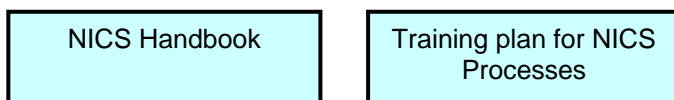A3.7   <u>Benchmark against other public and private sector organisations.</u>

A benchmarking exercise was carried out with approaches made to a large number of organizations across the public and private sectors, of which the following organizations responded - *Isle of Man Government, HM Revenue and Customs, Scottish Executive and Queens University Belfast*. From the responses received it is evident that they have or are taking a similar approach to that of the NICS in the provision of learning opportunities to develop the potential of staff at senior levels - i.e. grade based programmes, mentoring and coaching opportunities. Access was also given to a draft Cabinet Office paper on SCS Development - proposed solutions were similar to those identified within the strategy.

A number of organizations, however, were unable to provide details in sufficient time and have offered to meet in the future, particularly in relation to progress made in the area of Talent Management.

INDICATIVE INDUCTION FRAMEWORK

On Appointment	Week 1	By 2nd Month	3-12 months
SCS 'Virtual Handbook' Induction Mentor appointed Issue Induction Timetable Provision of Minister's/ Permanent Secretary First Day Brief Meeting with Predecessor	Meeting with Line Manager Meeting with Permanent Secretary Meeting with all direct reports	1 Day Induction Briefing[1] Programme of visits to other Divisions within the Department as appropriate Creation of Personal Development Plan Meetings with other key stakeholders	Agreed personal objectives and development plan (3 months) Review discussion with CPG Management[2] (3 months) Core Induction Programme (6-9 months) Exposure to Assembly Committees

Additional Activities (Externally Recruited)

NICS Handbook	Training plan for NICS Processes

[1] *Induction Briefing to include reform programme and briefing from HOCS/Perm Sec & supporting functions (e.g.: CAL, CFG, CPG, EIS) to ensure awareness of expectations & available support*

[2] *Review discussion to include what can be learned from previous organisation*