



Department
for International
Development



DEPARTMENTAL BOARD OPERATING FRAMEWORK

1. Introduction

The Department for International Development's mission is to promote sustainable economic and social development and reduce extreme poverty in poor, fragile and conflict-affected states. Its strategic objectives and structural reform priorities are set out in the DFID Business Plan¹; and its expected results are set in the DFID Results Framework².

The Department for International Development (DFID) Departmental Board (the Board) forms the collective strategic and operational leadership of the Department, bringing together Ministers and Executive Management Committee members with senior non-executives from outside government.

This Operating Framework is intended to set a clear governance framework for the Board. It should be read in conjunction with the Ministerial Code and the Civil Service Code.

2. Membership

Membership of the Board comprises:

- Secretary of State for International Development, chair;
- Minister of State for International Development, deputy chair;
- Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for International Development
- House of Lords Spokesperson for International Development
- Two departmental Non-Executive Board Members, including one appointed as Lead Non-Executive Board Member
- Permanent Secretary
- Four Directors General for Finance and Corporate Performance; Policy and Global Programmes; Africa, South & East Asia and Western Hemisphere; and West Asia, Middle East, Security and Humanitarian.

Special Advisers, the Principal Private Secretary to the Secretary of State, and the Board Secretary (also Private Secretary to the Permanent Secretary) are standing invitees.

3. Interests

¹ <http://www.dfid.gov.uk/About-us/How-we-measure-progress/DFID-Business-plan-2011-2015/>

² <http://www.dfid.gov.uk/About-us/How-we-measure-progress/DFID-Results-Framework/>

A register of interests of both Ministers and Non-Executive Board members is maintained by DFID and will be reviewed at appropriate intervals. It is the responsibility of Ministers and Non-Executive Board members to withdraw from any discussions in which they have any interests which may, or may be perceived to, influence their judgement.

4. Role of the Board

The Board will:

- Set DFID's strategic direction, including through oversight of the DFID Business Plan;
- Monitor the implementation of DFID's strategy and policy priorities;
- Monitor progress against the results set out in the Bilateral and Multilateral Aid Reviews and the Humanitarian Emergency Response Review;
- Monitor and advise on significant risks to implementation;
- Recommend remedial actions if operational or financial performance is off track.

5. Accountability and Roles

All Board members should uphold the seven principles of public life:

- Selflessness
- Integrity
- Objectivity
- Accountability
- Openness
- Honesty
- Leadership

The Board should ensure that it operates within the parameters of this Operating Framework, as well as any government policy relating to corporate governance and accountability.

5.1 Ministerial roles

The Secretary of State and Ministers are accountable to Parliament for all matters of DFID policy, decisions and actions, under the principle of Ministerial Responsibility. The Secretary of State is also accountable to Cabinet and the Prime Minister as a member of his Cabinet.

All Ministers are subject to the Ministerial Code, which requires them to take consideration of the Civil Service Code in their dealings with civil servants.

The Chair of the Board (Secretary of State or deputy) should:

- ensure a high standard of discussion;
- facilitate collective working and decision-making;
- uphold other agreed ways of working;
- ensure that a Board effectiveness review is performed annually with independent input at least every three years, and that results are acted upon.

5.2 Permanent Secretary and other Executive Board Members roles

The Permanent Secretary is responsible for the effectiveness and efficiency of all aspects of the Department's work, including management of DFID's operations, staff and financial resources as Chair of the Executive Management Committee. The role of Permanent

Secretary carries with it the personal responsibility of Principal Accounting Officer (AO), ensuring that the resources authorised by Parliament are used for the purposes authorised by Parliament and answering for the propriety and regularity of DFID expenditure.

The role of the Permanent Secretary on the Board is to:

- ensure line of sight between the Departmental Board, the Executive Management Committee and the Executive Management Committee sub-committees;
- be accountable for the management of the Department, including any significant issues which may impact on the Department's leadership, medium-term capability and reputation;
- raise any matters that threaten the regularity, propriety or value-for-money with which the Department carries out its business.

All other executive Board members are, as civil servants, subject to the Civil Service Code, with the four principles of integrity, honesty, objectivity and impartiality. The code also specifies that civil servants are accountable to Ministers, who in turn are accountable to Parliament.

5.3 Non-Executive Board Members roles

Non-Executive Board Members should act with integrity and objectivity and in the best interests of DFID.

The Lead Non-Executive Board Member is appointed by the Prime Minister on the recommendation of the Secretary of State and Permanent Secretary. The Lead Non-Executive shall:

- support the Secretary of State in his or her role as chair of the board;
- provide constructive, independent challenge and support the Board on the progress and implementation of the Business Plan, and implementation of government-wide policies and initiatives;
- lead the process for the Board's annual effectiveness review and ensure the Board acts on recommendations and builds its own capability;
- satisfy him or herself on the integrity of financial information and that financial controls and systems and risk management are robust and defensible (with ultimate responsibility for this area lying with the Accounting Officer);
- work with the Permanent Secretary and the Secretariat to ensure that agendas and papers submitted to the Board are of high quality and enable the Board to make decisions effectively;
- be invited to attend the Executive Management Committee;
- be invited to attend the Senior Leadership Committee, and participate in senior appointments and departmental succession planning strategy;
- provide ongoing feedback to board members as well as contributing to the performance appraisal of Board members and senior officials in DFID; and
- meet regularly with other Non-Executive Board Members.

The second Non-Executive Board Member should use their experiences and skills from outside DFID to provide objective and constructive challenge on the Board. The second Non-Executive shall:

- provide constructive, independent challenge and support the Board on the progress and implementation of the Business Plan;

- as Chair of Audit Committee, provide assurance and satisfy him or herself on the integrity of financial information and that financial controls and systems and risk management are robust and defensible (with ultimate responsibility for this area lying with the Accounting Officer);
- be a member of the Executive Management Committee; and
- be invited to attend the Senior Leadership Committee, and participate in senior appointments and departmental succession planning strategy.

Both Non-Executive Board Members will be part of a network across Government, led by the Government Lead Non-Executive. This network will meet every six months.

6. Board Decisions and Ways of Working

The Board shall seek to adhere to the following ways of working:

- The Board will meet quarterly.
- The Secretary of State will chair the meetings. The Minister of State shall act as deputy chair in his absence.
- Decisions should be made by the Board collectively.
- If a Non-Executive Board Member has concerns, they can raise them with either the Permanent Secretary or the Secretary of State.
- The Board shall be supported by a Board Secretary (also Private Secretary to the Permanent Secretary), who shall work closely with the Chair – usually through the Principal Private Secretary – on: setting the forward agenda; liaising with Non-Executive Board Members; preparing high quality and timely papers; taking accurate minutes which shall be published on Insight and the DFID website; and ensuring agreed actions are implemented.
- Apologies for absence should be notified to the Board Secretary at the earliest opportunity. The Board Secretary will inform the Chair of the views of any absent Board members submitted in advance.

9. Reviewing the Operating Framework

This Operating Framework may be reviewed at any time with the agreement of the Board, but at least every two years.

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