

**Call for Applications to Serve as Peer Reviewers on an  
Expert Panel for the SOLAS/ETB Strategic Dialogue Process**

**Overview**

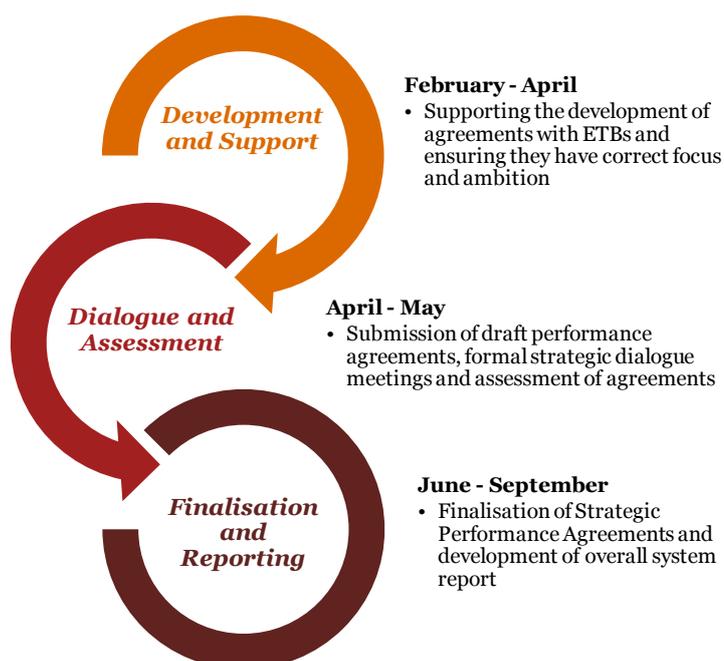
SOLAS is seeking applications from individuals seeking to serve as peer reviewers on an expert panel for the SOLAS/ETB strategic dialogue process. Each peer reviewer will be required to be available for approximately 12 working days over the period 26<sup>th</sup> April to 8<sup>th</sup> June 2018.

**Background**

SOLAS is committed to establishing a process of strategic dialogue and agreeing multi-annual strategic performance agreements with each of the 16 Education and Training Boards (ETBs) in 2018. The agreements are critical as they should set out a clear agreed direction of travel between SOLAS and each ETB, aligned with a defined contribution to key national FET sector targets (established in consultation with the Department of Education and Skills). It is hoped that the introduction of multi-annual strategic performance agreements will ultimately provide a foundation for increased and more effective investment in FET, with each ETB agreement reflecting:

- Links to wider strategic planning of the ETB and relevant national, regional and local policy/strategy context
- Real understanding of unique characteristics of the region and learners it serves
- A set of strategic priorities for FET which reflect these characteristics
- The unique contribution which the ETB will make to FET over the 3 years
- An innovative and adaptable approach to the evolving landscape
- Clear targets for ETB contribution to national sectoral targets
- Risks, challenges and opportunities over the next three years and how these can be addressed

The process was launched with an event attended by ETB CEOs, FET Directors and other representatives on 9<sup>th</sup> February, 2018. Since that time, a series of support workshops have been held with groups of ETBs to support the setting of draft targets and the development of draft strategic performance agreements, a process which will continue to the end of April. A process of strategic dialogue will then progress throughout the month of May, with formal meetings held in each ETB location to assess the draft performance agreements, which will then be finalised based on the outcome of these meetings.



A critical part of the process is the role of the Expert Panel. It is acknowledged that the intensive support role played by SOLAS in developing the agreements means that some external independent input will be required to validate that they are robust and challenging. The panel will also play a role in ensuring that any improvements that should be made, in line with international good practice in further education and training, can be flagged and addressed before agreements are finalised.

### **The Requirement**

As noted above, SOLAS is seeking to recruit individuals to serve as peer reviewers on this expert panel. An overall panel of 6-10 members is targeted. Prospective candidates will be assessed on the basis of their ability to bring at least one of the following attributes, and a balance across these attributes will be sought when selecting the overall panel:

- the Irish further education and training system
- academic research on further education and training; and
- international good practice in further education and training.

To avoid potential conflicts of interest, peer reviewers should not be currently employed by, or be serving as a member of the Board of, either SOLAS or an ETB.

It is envisaged that 2 independent peer reviewers will review each draft ETB strategic performance agreement, and participate within the strategic dialogue meetings with that ETB, providing formal feedback both before and after the meetings in relation to each ETB. It is proposed that each panel member would be allocated 4 ETBs for review. The time breakdown for work in relation to each ETB is as follows:

1.5 days	Review of background information on the ETB, the draft ETB strategic performance agreement and provision of feedback in advance of strategic dialogue meeting
1 day	Participation in formal strategic dialogue meeting on-site at each ETB location
0.5 days	Provision of feedback following meeting to feed into finalisation of agreements

This will mean a time requirement of 12 days from each successful candidate assuming 4 ETBs are allocated for review. Peer reviewers must ensure that they are available for 12 working days during the period 25<sup>th</sup> April to 8<sup>th</sup> June 2018. It is proposed that an honorarium of €600 per day will be paid for the successful candidate, plus any travel and expenses incurred (reimbursable in line with standard SOLAS consultants' rates).

### **Application and Assessment Process**

Any interested candidates should submit their CV and any relevant supplementary information to [andrew.brownlee@solas.ie](mailto:andrew.brownlee@solas.ie) by 5pm on **Friday 13<sup>th</sup> April 2018**. Applications will be assessed by awarding a score out of:

**75 marks** on the degree to which expertise is demonstrated with regard to ***at least one of the following attributes***: the Irish further education and training system; academic research on further education and training; and international good practice in further education and training.

**25 marks** on the level of experience demonstrated within relevant roles in an education and training setting

The marks will be added to give a total score for each candidate, with the candidates then ranked in order of score, and the peer reviewers for the panel selected on this basis.

Successful candidates will be notified by **20<sup>th</sup> April 2018**. Confirmation of appointment will be subject to agreement to SOLAS terms and conditions.