



The State Laboratory
An tSaotharlann Stáit

Corporate Governance Framework for the State Laboratory

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The State Laboratory

The State Laboratory is a scheduled office under the aegis of the Department of Public Expenditure, NDP Delivery and Reform and provides a comprehensive chemical analytical and advisory service to Government Departments and Offices, thereby enabling them to implement their regulatory programmes and attain their strategic objectives.

Staff are actively involved in EU and international analytical affairs. The State Chemist has enforcement and referee status under various acts of the Oireachtas and their implementing regulations.

The State Laboratory operates in accordance with a documented quality system based on an international standard for competence of testing laboratories (ISO/IEC 17025) and is accredited by the Irish National Accreditation Board as being in compliance with this standard for specific areas of work (INAB Reg. No. 146T). The State Laboratory is an EU National Reference Laboratory for additives for use in animal nutrition, persistent organic pollutants in food and animal feed, for heavy metals and mycotoxins in animal feed, and for a variety of veterinary drug residues and mycotoxins in food of animal origin.

Corporate Governance Framework

In 2015, the first Corporate Governance Standard for the Civil Service was published. The Corporate Governance Framework for the State Laboratory sets out how the Laboratory complies with the Standard. Many of the requirements of the Standard are documented in the State Laboratory Quality System and other internal documents. Where internal documents are referenced, the relevant text can be requested by emailing info@statelab.ie.

Department Overview

Governance Principle:

1

Good governance supports a culture and ethos, which ensures behaviour with integrity, a strong commitment to ethical values, and respect for the rule of law.

Mission/Purpose of the Department

The Mission, Vision, and High Level Objective of The State Laboratory is stated on Page 2 of The State Laboratory Strategy Statement 2020-2023 www.statelab.ie/publications.html.

Values, Behaviours and Culture

The State Laboratory Values are stated on Page 2 of The State Laboratory Strategy Statement [2023-2026 www.statelab.ie/publications.html](http://www.statelab.ie/publications.html). The State Laboratory encompasses the values of honesty, impartiality and integrity, and behaviours as outlined in the Civil Service Code of Standards and Behaviour. A copy of the Code is issued to all appointees who must record that they have read it. The Dignity at Work Policy is available to all staff via the Paradigm system.

Organisation Structures

The organisation and management structure of The State Laboratory is described in the Quality Manual – Section 01 Organisation and Management Structure and is included in every Annual Report www.statelab.ie/publications.html.

Strategic Planning, Decision Making & Performance Management

The State Laboratory produces a Strategy Statement at least once every 3 years, as required by the Public Service Management Act 1997. The process is led by the Management Board and includes consultation with Senior Managers, Clients and other Stakeholders. The Strategy Statement is submitted to the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform for Ministerial approval before publication on www.statelab.ie/publications.html. Progress related to the Strategic Goals is reported annually in The State Laboratory Annual Report and in the Output Statement. The State Laboratory Management Process including Business Planning is described in the Quality Manual – Section 01 Organisation and Management Structure.

Internal Communications

The arrangements for internal communications are described in the Quality Manual – Organisation and Management Structure.

Engagement with External Stakeholders

The State Laboratory is committed to openness and transparency in all aspects of its work.

The policies and arrangements in relation to service to the client are set out in the Quality System documentation, in particular:

Quality Manual – Section 04 Review of Requests for Analysis

Quality Manual – Section 07 Service to the Client

Quality Manual – Section 08 Complaints

SOP 005 – Resolution of Client Complaints

SOP 012 – Service Level Agreement and Capability Review

Under the Quality Customer Service Initiative, the State Laboratory has a Customer Charter which is available on the website www.statelab.ie/publications.html.

When developing the Strategy, customers and stakeholders of the State Laboratory are consulted about their top service priorities for the next three years and feedback is sought on what the State Laboratory does well and what could be improved.

The State Laboratory services EU and other international committees at the request of its client Departments. Laboratory personnel also participate in the work of other international expert scientific bodies and conferences. Details of these are included in the State Laboratory annual report. www.statelab.ie/publications.html

Review of Effectiveness of Governance Framework

The State Laboratory Governance Framework will be reviewed annually to ensure its effectiveness and that the Governance Framework is maintained and kept up to date. The review will include recommendations from internal or external audits to ensure any relevant actions are captured in the Governance Framework.

Ministerial and Senior Management Roles & Assignment of Responsibilities

Governance Principle:

2

Good governance helps to define priorities and outcomes in terms of sustainable economic and societal benefits and to determine the policies and interventions necessary to optimise the achievement of these priorities and outcomes. It means implementing good practices in transparency, reporting, communications, audit and scrutiny to deliver effective accountability.

Minister

The State Laboratory is a scheduled office under the aegis of the Department of Public Expenditure, NDP Delivery and Reform. The role and responsibilities of the Minister for Public Expenditure, NDP Delivery and Reform are described in the Department of Public Expenditure, NDP Delivery and Reform Governance Framework. The principal legislative provisions governing the Minister's powers are the Public Service Management Act 1997 and the Ministers and Secretaries Acts 1924 to 2013; the 2011 Ministers and Secretaries (Amendment) Act assigned public service functions and expenditure management functions previously held by the Minister for Finance to the Minister for Public Expenditure, NDP Delivery and Reform.

Relationship with the Minister

The Minister appoints the Accounting Officer. The draft Statement of Strategy is sent to the Minister for approval. The State Laboratory provides briefing material to the Minister for the annual Estimates Debate.

Leadership and Organisational Capacity/Capability

The Management Board and Section Managers lead and manage the implementation of the systems, processes and behaviours necessary to promote good corporate governance across the organisation so that all staff work together as a high performing team. Each individual manager has a responsibility to show leadership, to contribute to the management of the Laboratory as a whole and to actively support colleagues in meeting their objectives.

The management system, roles and responsibilities are set out in the Quality System and other laboratory documentation, in particular:

Quality Manual – Section 01 Organisation and Management Structure

Quality Manual – Appendix 01 Overview of Sections

Quality Manual – Appendix 02 Organisational Charts

Quality Manual – Appendix 05 Quality System Roles

A Review of Capability is included in the annual Business Planning Process for each Section.

State Chemist & Accounting Officer

The responsibilities of the State Chemist are published on whodoeswhat.gov.ie

The State Chemist is the Accounting Officer for the State Laboratory (Vote 14) and is responsible for the money entrusted to the Laboratory, for the use made of its resources and for control of the assets in its keeping including, buildings and equipment. The statutory role of the Accounting Officer is set out in the Comptroller and Auditor General Acts 1866 to 1998 and also set out in the Public Financial Procedures.

As Accounting Officer, the State Chemist is personally responsible for the safeguarding of public funds and property under her control; for the regularity and propriety of all the transactions in each Appropriation Account bearing her signature; and for the efficiency and economy of administration in the Laboratory. The Accounting Officer is personally answerable to the Oireachtas Committee of Public Accounts (PAC) for regularity, propriety and value for money through rigorous post factum examination of the manner in which Accounting Officers have discharged their responsibilities by means of independent audit and examinations by the Comptroller and Auditor General.

Responsibilities of all Staff

All staff have a role to play in assuring good governance, adherence to the Civil Service Code of Standards and Behaviours in the performance of their duties, as well as to corporate policies, procedures, circulars and Office Notices.

Assignment of Senior Management Roles & Responsibilities

The State Chemist assigns responsibility for the performance of functions by individual Principal Chemists in accordance with Section 4(1) and 9(2) of the Public Service Management Act 1997. The assignments are published on whodoeswhat.gov.ie

Management Board and other Governance Structures

Governance Principle:

3

Good governance means developing the Department's capacity, including the capability of the leadership team, management and staff.

Management Board

The State Chemist and Principal Chemists are the members of the State Laboratory Management Board.

Formal meetings of the Management Board are attended by all members of the Management Board. Section Managers or their Deputies attend Management Board meetings at least quarterly. Other members of staff may be asked to attend for particular agenda items related to their lab-wide responsibilities.

Appendix A contains the Terms of Reference of the State Laboratory Management Board.

Management Board Information / Documentation

Papers for Management Board Meetings are circulated to attendees in advance of the meeting where feasible.

Minutes of the Management Board meetings are made available to all staff following approval.

Governance Principle:

4

Good governance means managing risks and performance through robust internal control systems and effective performance management practices.

Audit and Assurance Arrangements

The Accounting Officer supplies a signed Statement of Internal Financial Control to the Comptroller and Auditor General with the Annual Appropriation Account. The Statement is included in the Annual Report available at www.statelab.ie/publications.html. The Statement contains a description of the State Laboratory's system of internal control including:

- a. Accounting Officer assurance that an effective system of internal financial control is maintained and operated by the State Laboratory;
- b. Assurance arrangements between the State Laboratory and the National Shared Service Office;
- c. Role of Audit Committee;
- d. Role of Internal Audit Unit;
- e. Role of internal Finance Unit;
- f. Risk Management; and
- g. Public Procurement.

Compliance Framework

Appendix B contains the State Laboratory's compliance framework. This provides an overview of all compliance assurance activity in the Laboratory, and identifies who within the Department is responsible for each activity.

Risk Management

The State Laboratory's risk management system is detailed in Document HRPS09 – Risk Management Policy.

Quality System

The quality system is accredited by the Irish National Accreditation Board to the ISO17025 standard. It is subject to internal and external audits in compliance with the standard.

Bodies under the Aegis of the State Laboratory

Governance Principle:

5

Good governance ensures openness, effective public consultation processes and comprehensive engagement with domestic and international stakeholders.

There are no bodies under the aegis of the State Laboratory

Appendix A - The State Laboratory Management Board Terms of Reference

1. Membership

The State Chemist and Principal Chemists are the members of the State Laboratory Management Board.

Formal meetings of the Management Board are attended by all members of the Management Board. A quorum of three members of the Management Board is required. Section Managers or their Deputies attend Management Board meetings at least quarterly. Other members of staff may be asked to attend for particular agenda items related to their lab-wide responsibilities.

2. Roles

The State Chemist is the Chairperson of the Management Board and is responsible for:

- a) Scheduling and chairing regular meetings;
- b) Ensuring the Management Board considers any matters that threaten the propriety or value for money with which the Laboratory carries out its business; and
- c) Ensuring the Management Board considers any significant issues which may impact on the Laboratory's medium term capacity and capability or significant risks to delivery on its objectives, together with details of mitigating actions proposed or taken.

The Senior Management Team is comprised of the Management Board, Senior Chemists and Assistant Principals. The Senior Management Team attend Management Board meetings at least quarterly. Members of the Senior Management Team are responsible for:

- a) Specific responsibilities arising from their individual roles as Senior Management Team members;
- b) Actively participating in the management of the entire Laboratory and not focusing solely on their own functions when providing leadership and strategic direction, and driving and overseeing the implementation of strategies;
- c) Using their experience to challenge and critically examine items under discussion by the Senior Management Team;
- d) Notifying the Management Board of any matters that threaten the propriety or value for money with which the Laboratory carries out its business; and

- e) Notifying the Management Board of any significant issues which may impact on the Laboratory's medium term capacity and capability or significant risks to delivery of its objectives, together with details of mitigating actions proposed or taken.

3. Decisions and Reporting

The following matters are dealt with by the Management Board:

- a) Strategic Planning;
- b) Business Planning for the Laboratory;
- c) Risk Management;
- d) Workforce Planning;
- e) Senior Management Training
- f) Budget allocation and performance;
- g) Governance arrangements;

The following matters are dealt with by the Senior Management Team:

- a) The Strategy Statement;
- b) Review of Risk Register;
- c) Significant changes to the Quality System;
- d) Health and Safety;
- e) Ensuring that lab-wide and longer term issues are fully accounted for in resource planning, policy formulation and advice;
- f) Ensuring effective communication throughout the organisation including dissemination of information on the decisions of the Senior Management Team where appropriate, driving engagement with staff and communication with external stakeholders;
- g) Considering and debating major policy issues and wider external issues of significance;
- h) Ensure that opportunities exist to exploit and embrace technology and innovation to transform how services are delivered;
- i) Review of certain documents prior to publication such as the Annual Report.

The agenda for the Management Board Meetings comprises:

Standing Items: Minutes; Finance; Building Infrastructure; HR/PMDS; Staff Ideas; AOB

Quarterly Items: ICT; Health and Safety; Operation of Analytical Sections; Quality; LIMS;

Biannual Items: Risk Management; Business Continuity Plan Review; Learning and Development; Innovation; Project Management

4. Performance and Evaluation

The delivery, performance and effectiveness of the Management Board is reviewed at the Annual Quality Management Review.

Appendix B – Compliance Framework

The compliance framework lists the obligations of the Laboratory, broken down into 3 categories: a) statutory; b) government decisions; and c) administrative and policy initiatives. The Management Board are responsible for ensuring compliance with the obligations.

A. Statutory Requirements or Established Compliance Obligations
1. Ministerial and Departmental functions under the Ministers and Secretaries Acts 1924 - 2013
2. Data Protection Act
3. Freedom of Information Act
4. Ethics/Standards in Public Office obligations
5. National Archives Act
6. Taxes Consolidation Act 1997
7. Compliance with Official Languages Legislation
8. Compliance with Employment Law and Civil Service HR Legislative Provisions
9. Compliance with Disability Legislation
10. Appropriation Accounts
11. Compliance with Public Financial Procedures
12. Agreement of Strategy Statement with Minister
13. Submission of Annual Report to the Minister
14. Other Functions under the Public Service Management Act 1997
15. Accreditation to ISO 17025
16. Health and Safety
17. Compliance with Procurement Directives
18. Protected Disclosures

B. Government Decisions
1.
2.
3.
4.
5.

C. Administrative & Policy Initiatives
1. Integrated Reform Delivery Plan Returns
2. Review of Legislation in Accordance with Statutory or Government Commitments
3. Effective Business Planning Process
4. Oversight of Robust Performance Management Arrangements
5. Adherence to Civil Service HR Guidelines/Circulars
6. Timely and Accurate Replies to PQs and other Oireachtas Requests for Information
7. PAC Appearances
8. Statement of Internal Financial Control
9. Internal Audit Function
10. Compliance with CPSA Codes of Practice
14. Record Management Guidelines March 2013
15. Risk Register