

Non-Executive Directors Appointment Brief

September 2024



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Prior to submitting a CV, we recommend that all applicants familiarise themselves with the contents of this information pack.

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Welcome

Dear Applicant

Catalyst – Appointment of Non-Executive Director

Thank-you for your interest in joining the Catalyst Board. This pack has been prepared to provide further information about our organisation.

Catalyst is headquartered on a 25 acre site in Titanic Quarter, Belfast. We also have facilities at our North-West Regional Science Park, Derry/Londonderry, which is also the hub of a cross border economic initiative with the Atlantic Technological University, Letterkenny. We have a strong board, made up of a diverse range of individuals from GB, ROI and NI, all passionate about enabling a thriving Innovation Community in this region.

Since 1999, Catalyst has been a leading provider of innovation workspace. Today, we provide a home to 3000 people and 141 companies, supported by a network of 570 pro-bono business mentors.

In addition to workspace, Catalyst supports a thriving community of like-minded innovators. Through our comprehensive facilities and entrepreneurial support programmes, we have become a key player in the NI innovation economy supporting economic growth and fostering opportunity.

2024 marks the 25th year of Catalyst. For a quarter – century, Catalyst and our partners have been empowering businesses and communities in NI and the North West region of Ireland. As we look to the next 25 years we are on the threshold of an exciting future and are looking to complement the professional skills of our Board through several new appointments. Together we aim to drive this momentum and work to deliver our shared vision of Opportunity for all from World-Leading Innovation. I hope the information enclosed is helpful and encourages you to apply.

Yours sincerely,



Ellvena Graham

Ellvena Graham OBE
Chairman

Background

Appointment of Non-Executive Directors and Chairperson

Catalyst wishes to invite candidates who share our passion for entrepreneurship, inclusive innovation, and ambition for Northern Ireland, to submit applications in the form of their CV for the appointment of up to four Non-Executive Directors to the Board including the position of Chair.

As an Equal Opportunity employer, we prioritize merit-based appointments and are committed to fostering diversity on our Board and throughout our organisation. Catalyst particularly encourages female candidates to apply for these positions as part of our efforts to ensure diverse representation at the board level.

The Background

Catalyst is the trading name of the Northern Ireland Science Park Foundation Ltd group of companies and was established as part of the economic initiatives arising from the Good Friday Agreement. The Northern Ireland Science Park, a company limited by guarantee, was then established by the Department of Economic Development (now Department for the Economy).



Who We Are

Catalyst is an independent, non-profit science and technology hub focused on fostering innovation and entrepreneurship in Northern Ireland.

The epicentre of innovation in Northern Ireland, we provide everything that innovators and entrepreneurs need to reach higher and succeed faster – a home, a powerful community, enhanced by international networks of venture capital, and market development support.

Today, over 3000 engineers, researchers, entrepreneurs, and executives work across our sites in Belfast, and Derry/Londonderry, enabling Catalyst to invest the surplus generated from property operations to provide the underwriting necessary for a community led supported ecosystem, supporting over 900 entrepreneurs per year in Northern Ireland to start and scale fast growth innovation companies.

Inclusivity is at the core of what we do at Catalyst, we are working to remove the barriers that prevent people from accessing opportunities in the innovation economy, such as access to entrepreneurship and learning the skills to innovate.

We invest, pro bono, all surplus profits from our property portfolio into nurturing a community-led innovation ecosystem that supports technology-focused start-ups, entrepreneurs, and innovators so they can create, scale, and flourish.



Our Strategic Focus

In May 2022 we unveiled our new strategy which we believe will generate significant economic benefits for Northern Ireland by enabling more of the population to access opportunities created by innovative industries. Our Strategy is guided by a clear vision and mission and is supported by 3 strategic pillars.

Vision

Opportunity for all from world-leading innovation.

We want to help to create a society whose economy makes a difference to the world, contributing to solving global challenges, achieving this because of the breadth of participation and creativity of all people from all backgrounds. This is what 'inclusive innovation', means to us.

Mission

We make it easy for you to innovate.

Innovation is very hard, and few companies possess the resources to meet all of their innovation needs internally. Innovation is often made harder by the fragmentation that exists between parties with a role to assist and stimulate innovation; and the bureaucracy and the risk aversion applied to those interventions.

This is not just in Northern Ireland; this is the case in nearly every city in the world. Whether the innovator is a multi-national corporation (MNC), a start-up or scale up, or a young person farthest from opportunity, Catalyst's role is to help make the process of innovating or collaborating to innovate easier.

Pillars

Future Workspace – Providing state-of-the-art, flexible workspaces for businesses of all sizes, our spaces are designed to foster collaboration and creativity, coming with all the amenities they need to live and work.

Coupled with the Catalyst Community of entrepreneurs, mentors, and members this combines to create a competitive advantage from where you work.

Open Innovation – Enabling companies that want to become Innovation Driven Enterprises, academia, and government to accelerate technology-based research and development.

This helps to ensure that Northern Ireland remains at the forefront of innovation.

Entrepreneurship & Scaling – Offering a variety of entrepreneurial support programmes, including mentorship, networking opportunities, and access to funding opportunities. These programmes are designed to help entrepreneurs create and scale new innovative businesses.

Celebrating 25 Years of Innovation, Growth, and Opportunity.

This year Catalyst is celebrating its 25th Anniversary and over the next six months Catalyst plans to run a series of events to engage and collaborate with its partners to set specific strategic goals for the next decade for Northern Ireland's innovation sector, across R&D, scaling companies and inclusive entrepreneurship.

Earlier this year Catalyst was recognised as one of the leading start-up hubs in Europe in a special report produced by the Financial Times, Sifted and Statista. The research placed Catalyst in the top 10 start-up hubs in the UK & Ireland and top third in Europe, ranking it number 40 out of 125 locations based on the performance and success rates of their business support programmes, incubators and accelerators.

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“Over the past 25 years of supporting innovation and entrepreneurship Catalyst has worked hard to create a community and ecosystem which has enabled people from NI to make a massive impact on the global stage in tech, science and industry. Catalyst has gone from being a portacabin in a derelict corner of Belfast's shipyards to one of the FT's top 10 start-up hubs in the UK and Ireland.

But how we do things in the next 25 years has to look different. Catalyst's vision is that NI will lead the way in proving that inclusive entrepreneurship and equality of opportunity can benefit a whole region. Empowering the next generation of entrepreneurs and innovators isn't something we can do alone. So we're calling for our successful individuals at home and around the world, our market-leading companies and key stakeholders in government, universities and education to work with us to shape what comes next. If you want this place to be truly great, don't watch from the sidelines, bring what you have to offer to the table.”

– Steve Orr, CEO, Catalyst



Values

We are a force for good, bold in our approach, with integrity at our core and passionate in everything we do.

Staffing

Catalyst currently operates with a staffing complement comprising 50 full-time employees. Executives report to the Group Boards of Directors, which currently comprise 11 Non-Executive Directors with a rich blend of skills and experience.

Group Structure

Northern Ireland Science Park Foundation Limited (“the Foundation”) is a not-for-profit company limited by guarantee. The Foundation is the parent company of the group of companies summarised below. The Group consists of the Foundation, its wholly owned subsidiary, Northern Ireland Science Park (Holdings) Limited, (“Holdings”) and three wholly owned subsidiaries of Holdings, Northern Ireland Science Park Property Limited, Northern Ireland Science Park Trading Company Limited and North West Regional Science Park Limited.

The Foundation's memorandum and articles are constructed so as to conform to the UK Science Park Association's definition of a science park, regarding business support and technology transfer. The Foundation is not structured to undertake trading or other business activities. Any profits accruing to the Foundation will be reinvested to promote its objectives.

Holdings operates with general commercial objectives and has shareholdings in subsidiary companies, each of which will undertake specific business activities within the Foundation's remit. The property company has ownership of the Belfast site and manages the estate and its tenants.

Role Profile

Responsibilities of Non-Executive Directors

The main duties are:

1. Act as an ambassador for the Board, representing and acting impartially in good faith and in the best interests of Catalyst at all times.
2. Undertake the duties of a Company Director and uphold the company's commitment to high standards of corporate governance, ensuring adherence to legal, ethical, and regulatory frameworks.
3. Prepare for and attend Board meetings, Committee meetings and other relevant events.
4. Contribute to the development, implementation, and continuous refinement of the company's strategic objectives and vision.
5. Provide independent, informed perspectives to guide long-term planning and reach sound and reasoned decisions.
6. Build and maintain constructive relationships between executive officers and Non-Executive Directors; and foster positive working relationships with other Board Members.
7. Oversee and evaluate the company's risk management framework, ensuring it is robust, effective, and aligned with the company's strategic objectives.
8. Review and challenge financial information and reporting to ensure accuracy, integrity, and transparency.
9. Monitor the company's financial performance and sustainability, ensuring its financial health and alignment with strategic goals.
10. Ensure that the company acts as a responsible employer, fostering a positive and fair workplace culture.
11. Assist in the annual review of Board effectiveness, contributing to continuous improvement in governance practices.
12. Promote and uphold the company's values, ethical standards, and commitment to environmental, social and governance in all Board activities.
13. Though not a public body, the Catalyst Board is committed to and deeply values the Nolan Principles, expecting all members to demonstrate them in their conduct.

NB: The above reflects typical duties for the Non-Executive Directors and are not intended to be a comprehensive list of all tasks.

Role Profile

Responsibilities of Chairperson

If applying for the role of Chair, please note that, in addition to the responsibilities outlined above, candidates will also be expected to undertake the following additional duties:

1. Chair board meetings to drive strategic progress and effective governance, ensuring discussions are focused and decisions are well-informed.
2. Develop and set agendas in consultation with the CEO/Company Secretary and board committees to align with strategic priorities and address key issues.
3. Ensure that board members receive complete and timely briefings from the CEO and executive team to support informed decision-making.
4. Foster open communication and balance among executive and non-executive directors to enhance board cohesion and effectiveness.
5. Ensure board committees are structured effectively and align with board objectives, contributing efficiently to strategic and governance tasks.
6. Track the organisation's performance against strategic goals and provide guidance on corrective actions to ensure alignment with the strategic plan.
7. Lead annual evaluations of board performance and the CEO, while facilitating training and development to improve board governance and strategic capability.
8. Oversee the recruitment, succession planning, and induction of new board members to build a complementary and high-performing board.
9. Provide strategic leadership and represent the organisation to external stakeholders to support its objectives and enhance its public image and standing within the ecosystem.

Person Specification

Non-Executive Director | Essential Criteria

Applicants must demonstrate in their CV that they can satisfy at least three of the following criteria:

1. Recent and relevant experience serving as a Board member or operating at Board level within a senior executive team.
2. Proven experience leading an organisation through strategic development, direction setting, and execution of strategic plans, either as the head or as part of a senior executive team. This includes a strong understanding and application of effective corporate governance principles.
3. Experience in driving or contributing to successful regional economic initiatives with a focus on driving innovation and sectoral growth. This may involve participation in research networks within the UK, Ireland, or the EU; developing sectoral clusters; leading cross-border projects; fostering entrepreneurial ecosystems; or supporting inward investments.
4. Demonstrated success as an entrepreneur or significant experience working alongside an entrepreneur in scaling a growing company targeting domestic and/or international markets.
5. A proven track record of successful international business experience, demonstrating a deep understanding of global markets and expertise in leveraging technology and data-driven strategies for modern revenue generation.
6. Demonstrated experience in community leadership, with a proven track record of successfully leading initiatives that positively impact diverse communities and foster meaningful societal change.
7. Significant experience in brand development and marketing at the executive level within international or multinational organizations, leading the formulation and execution of modern marketing strategies that drive growth and engagement.
8. Extensive legal expertise with a proven track record of advising on complex legal matters at Board level.
9. Proven financial leadership experience at the executive level, with expertise in financial planning, budgeting, and forecasting within an innovation-focused business operating at international or multinational organisation.
10. Previous experience in a senior official or leadership position within the Northern Ireland public sector or government, demonstrating a strong understanding of the political landscape and expertise in policy development at local, national, or international levels.

Person Specification

Chairperson | Essential Criteria

Candidates applying for the role of Chair, will also be required to demonstrate each of the following capabilities in their CV:

1. Demonstrated experience as a chairperson with a track record of guiding organisations through complex governance and strategic challenges.
2. Strong leadership abilities with a proven capacity to inspire and lead a diverse board, promoting a high-performance culture.
3. Ability to create a collaborative and constructive board environment, facilitating effective teamwork and balanced dialogue among board members and executives.
4. High level of diplomacy and tact in managing sensitive or confidential issues, with a demonstrated ability to handle complex situations with discretion and professionalism.
5. Exemplary integrity and a deep commitment to upholding the organisation's vision, mission, and values, ensuring all actions and decisions align with the organisation's long-term objectives.
6. Excellent communication skills, with the ability to articulate information clearly and persuasively to diverse audiences, including stakeholders, the board, and external partners.
7. In-depth understanding of corporate governance principles, with the ability to ensure compliance with best practices and regulatory requirements, while also promoting high standards of governance.
8. Proven ability to manage and resolve crises effectively, demonstrating strong problem-solving skills and maintaining strategic focus during challenging times.
9. Proficiency in engaging with a wide range of stakeholders, including government, academia and industry partners, to build strong relationships and enhance the organisation's reputation and standing.

Time Commitment & Remuneration

Non-Executive Director

Commitment: 18 days per year
Remuneration: Currently £10,500 per annum

Chairperson

Commitment: 24 days per year
Remuneration: Currently £21,000 per annum

Successful applicants will be expected to attend most Board meetings, Committee meetings and other events. By applying for the post, it is assumed that you can meet the time commitment. If shortlisted this issue will be explored at interview. Most meetings will take place during normal working hours.

Term of Appointment: Up to three years (one term) but can seek re-appointment for up to five additional one-year terms. An annual assessment of the performance of Non-Executive Directors is carried out by the Chair of the Board throughout the period of appointment. Reappointment may be considered subject to satisfactory standard of performance during the initial period of office.

Starting Date: There will be two planned start dates for new board members: February 2025 and June 2025. These dates have been chosen to align with the natural succession of board roles and the conclusion of existing terms, ensuring a smooth transition.

Location: Most Board meetings are usually held at Catalyst, Queen's Road, Queens Island, Belfast.

Expenses: Following appointment, travel and subsistence expenses are payable within reason. All remuneration is subject to deduction of income tax and national insurance.

Conflict of Interest

We are committed to the highest standards of propriety, ensuring impartiality, integrity, and objectivity in all aspects of board governance. As part of this commitment, we ask that candidates for non-executive director roles be transparent about any private, voluntary, charitable, or political interests that may be relevant to the work of the board.

While conflicts of interest are rare, it is essential to recognize that both real and perceived conflicts can arise. To maintain public confidence, candidates should consider and disclose any interests, such as financial holdings, memberships, or affiliations, that could potentially intersect with the board's responsibilities. This ensures a transparent, trusted environment where all directors can contribute fully to the organization's success.

Application Process

How to Apply

Professional CV's should be sent to **Shauna Collins**, Director of People & Culture by email to: **Shauna.collins@wearecatalyst.org**.

If applying for the Non-Executive Director position use the subject line, 'NED Application'. For the Chair position, use 'CHAIR Application'.

If applying for both roles, use 'NED and CHAIR application'.

Closing Date

All CV's must be received by 12.00 noon, Monday 30th September 2024.

Time Frame for Process

Interviews to be held the weeks commencing 14th and 21st October 2024. Applicants invited for interview are eligible for reimbursement of reasonable travelling expenses.

Information for Shortlisting and Interview Purposes

Applicants should refer to the Role Description and Person Specification and identify the extent to which they satisfy the essential criteria (including the competencies). Applicants will be assessed at shortlisting on the basis of the information provided on their CV – no other information, other than that supplied under the criteria sought, will be taken into account when shortlisting.

Criteria-based Selection Process

Your CV should provide clear and relevant evidence of how your experience demonstrates the criteria being sought.

Catalyst is an Equal Opportunities Employer

Catalyst is committed to promoting equality of opportunity and considers all applications solely based on merit. We welcome applications from all qualified individuals, regardless of religious belief, gender, disability, race, political opinion, age, or marital status.

As an Equal Opportunities employer, we request that applicants complete the Equal Opportunities Monitoring Information form. This information is collected for monitoring purposes only and will not be shared with the selection panel or influence the decision-making process.

References

Applicants are required to provide details of two referees. Referees will only be sought if under consideration for appointment.

Further Information

Should you have any further queries about the appointments process then please contact Shauna Collins, Director of People and Culture. All discussions will be held in the strictest confidence.

Email: shauna.collins@wearecatalyst.org

wearecatalyst.org

Catalyst