



**JOB DESCRIPTION:** Chief Executive Officer

**ORGANISATION:** Northern Ireland Food and Drink Association (NIFDA)

**LOCATION:** Belfast Mills, Percy Street, Belfast BT13 2HW

**REPORTS TO:** NIFDA Board and Chair

**DIRECT REPORTS:** Staff team (3)

**Role Purpose:**

To serve the vision of promoting sustainable growth within the Northern Ireland food and drink industry. The Chief Executive will act as the primary voice for members, ensuring their interests are represented with government and key stakeholders, and that NIFDA is recognised as the authoritative industry body.

**Key Responsibilities:**

**1. Strategic leadership and mission delivery**

- **Strategy development:** Create industry strategies that support member ambitions.
- **Networking:** Facilitate business network creation and collaborate with stakeholder bodies.
- **Information provision:** Ensure NIFDA remains a valued and trusted source of industry information for members.

**2. Governance, leadership & business management**

- **Leadership:** Provide general small business management for the staff team (3) and act in an ambassadorial role for member businesses.
- **Legal & fiduciary:** Serve as Legal Director of the company and Trustee of the Educational Trust Fund.
- **Board support:** Manage and support the NIFDA Board and provide direct support to the Chair.
- **Financial oversight:** Oversee membership fee collection (current £210k) and lead sponsorship recruitment and fundraising (current £145k), with agreed year-on-year growth targets for both.

**3. Lobbying and policy development**

- **Government relations:** Represent the industry to the Northern Ireland Office, Stormont, and at UK level (Westminster, Farmers' Club, NFU, MPs and MLAs).

- **Stakeholder engagement:** Participate in the NI Business Stakeholders Group on the Windsor Framework and other relevant groups, to promote and develop NIFDA as the voice of NI food & drink.
- **Policy focus:** Lead developments on new policies; adoption of existing policies from other nations; and advocacy for changes that support the industry (e.g., Invest NI Grants (£46m), the DAERA Nutrient Action Programme, sustainability initiatives including DMO development).
- **Liaison:** Build strong relationships and maintain close links with other trade bodies and relevant stakeholders (e.g., Food and Drink Federation, Food and Drink Ireland) and UK government departments (DEFRA, DBT, FSA UK).

#### 4. Member services and operations

- **Membership:** Manage member recruitment; understand member needs; and deliver actions required to retain and grow overall membership, addressing member queries as they arise.
- **Group management:** Oversee industry groupings within NIFDA work streams, including the Packaging Group and Drinks Group, and develop new groups aligned to emerging priorities.
- **Technical support:** Provide skilled technical support and commission relevant industry reports from independent firms (e.g., EY, KPMG).
- **Project management:** Oversee major funded projects including Advanced Food Manufacturing (£163k), Trace UU (€400k), and FEED (£60k), and ensure NIFDA supports new and relevant projects.

#### 5. Events and collaboration

- **Event oversight:** Deliver major industry events including the Annual Dinner (260 pax), AGM (35 pax), Biennial Food and Drink Awards (450 pax), and Biennial Conference (150 pax).
- **Collaborative partnerships:** Work closely with organisations such as NIMEA, NIGTA, Dairy UK, QUB, CAFRE and UU; and support IFST and student interest in industry.

#### 6. Media engagement and communications

- **Public representation:** Be the face and voice of NIFDA for interviews and media engagements.
- **External profile:** Build NIFDA's external profile through robust, targeted media plans.
- **Member communications:** Maintain strong communication with the membership on key events and topics, sharing timely updates following meetings and stakeholder engagement.

### Person Specification:

#### Essential

- Proven senior leadership experience, ideally within a membership organisation, trade body or closely related environment.
- Demonstrable experience influencing policy and engaging effectively with government and public bodies.
- Strong commercial acumen, including budget oversight, income generation and sponsorship/fundraising.
- Excellent stakeholder management skills, with the ability to represent member interests credibly and diplomatically.
- Experience delivering high-profile events and programmes, ensuring quality and strong member value.
- Strong communication skills, including media-facing representation.

### **Desirable**

- Good knowledge of the Northern Ireland and/or UK food and drink sector and its regulatory environment.
- Experience of managing funded/externally financed projects.
- Experience commissioning research and working with professional services firms.

### **Key skills and competencies**

- **Strategic leadership:** Sets direction, translates strategy into deliverable plans and outcomes.
- **Influence & advocacy:** Builds coalitions and secures impact with policymakers and stakeholders.
- **Financial management:** Budgeting, forecasting, governance and income growth.
- **Relationship building:** Trusted partner to members, board, government and sector bodies.
- **Operational delivery:** Prioritises effectively and delivers multiple workstreams to deadline.
- **Communication:** Clear, compelling written and verbal communication to varied audiences.

### **Key Relationships**

- NIFDA Board and Chair
- NIFDA members and member-led groups (e.g., Packaging Group, Drinks Group)
- NI Executive departments and agencies (e.g., DAERA, Invest NI) and UK Government departments (e.g., DEFRA, DBT, FSA UK)

- Industry bodies and partners (e.g., Food and Drink Federation, Food and Drink Ireland, NIMEA, NIGTA, Dairy UK, QUB, CAFRE, UU, IFST)
- Media and wider stakeholder community

**Application Details:**

To apply for this role CVs should be sent by email to Norah Whittaker, HR Consultant at [norahrw@btinternet.com](mailto:norahrw@btinternet.com) by Friday 31 July. Please also use this email address for any queries about the role. We expect to interview for the role late August.