



Board Meeting

20
November
2020

Agenda Item

30

Subject Cabinet Office/Public Chairs Forum – Diversity Mentoring Scheme
Purpose For Decision
From Acting Chief Executive

If you have any enquiries on this paper, please contact Marc Stoner at marcs@arb.org.uk or on 020 7580 5861

1. Summary

To decide whether ARB should sign up to the Cabinet Office/Public Chairs Forum Diversity Mentoring Scheme, which is aimed at supporting candidates, particularly those from under-represented groups, to secure public appointments.

2. Recommendations

It is recommended that the Board agrees that ARB should participate in the Cabinet Office/Public Chairs Forum's Diversity Mentoring Scheme.

3. Open Session

4. Contribution to the Board's Purpose and Objectives

The ARB is an inclusive organisation and we operate in line with the Government's public sector equality duty. We actively promote equality of opportunity for everybody who has dealings with us, irrespective of their race, gender, disability, religion, belief system, sexual orientation, age or socio-economic background, with the primary aims of eliminating discrimination, advancing equality of opportunity and fostering good relations between people of different groups.

5. Key Points

- i. The Public Chairs Forum (PCF) exists to enable Chairs of public bodies to work together to improve the efficiency and effectiveness with which public services are delivered. It consists of a network of Chairs of public bodies who then work together and engage with government through PCF events, seminars and research projects to effect positive change in their organisations.
- ii. The PCF is launching a new initiative which stems from the Cabinet Office's recently published Diversity Action Plan. By the end of this year, working jointly with the PCF and the Commissioner for Public Appointments, the Cabinet Office is seeking to set up a standalone mentoring pilot in a number of departments. The pilot scheme will focus on targeting and supporting 'near-miss' candidates, particularly those from under-represented groups, in an effort to assist them to secure a public appointment.

As part of this pilot the Cabinet Office wishes to explore offering experiential board

opportunities to develop board exposure and experience. The Cabinet Office will assess the success of the pilot a year after it is launched to determine how it may roll out a sustainable mentoring offer. In parallel the Cabinet Office will also develop plans for how it might extend any mentoring pilot to aspiring applicants from under-represented groups.

In summary, the objectives of the scheme are as follows:

1. To respond, in a broad way, to the Lord Holmes recommendation to Government to establish a mentoring programme to support talented disabled candidates.
2. To fulfill Government's commitment to having boards of public bodies represent the communities they serve and to be advocates of diversity
3. Opening up public appointments to all walks of life
4. To provide opportunities for those with potential with experienced Chairs with future talent
5. To assess the future benefits of a wider mentoring scheme

iii. The pilot scheme will operate as follows:

Working with three government departments and up to 20 of their near-miss candidates, selection for the pilot will be through an anonymous process based on the panel report and personal statement, overseen by a PCF Chair and departmental representative.

The criteria will be restricted to candidates who:

- o were found not appointable following interview;
- o are from an under-represented group (women, BAME or disabled); and
- o have not held a previous public appointment.

Matching mentors and mentees via:

- o a speed mentoring event where each party would get to choose two preferences; or
- o location and interests.

For the 12 month pilot the mentee/ mentor is expected to have up to six sessions (remote or face to face) including a shadowing opportunity; preferably chaired by their mentor. The following is an illustrates the kind of programme the mentee will undertake:

- 1) Introductory conversation: First meeting to set objectives in Month 1
- 2) Meet up: Meeting to discuss CV, public appointment applications and what panel looks for in Month 3
- 3) Experiential opportunity: Shadow opportunity at Board meeting/ another experiential experience in Month 5
- 4) Feedback: Meeting to discuss observations from board meeting in Month 7
- 5) Experiential opportunity: Second opportunity to shadow board in Month 9
- 6) Feedback & closure: Look back at objectives and discuss in Month 12

The Cabinet Office also plan to have masterclasses for the mentees some of which run by volunteers from PCF, including honorary members if possible, on topics such as;

- o making applications for appointment
- o understanding public sector selection processes
- o public sector finance

- governance
 - board behaviour and communication
 - dealing with interviews
 - how to be an effective board member.
- iv. The Board is asked to note the details of the Diversity Mentoring Scheme and agree that ARB should participate.

6. Resource implications

The PCF has confirmed that it would prefer mentees to be mentored by chairs of public bodies, although it has acknowledged that the time commitment involved may mean that Committee Chairs or Board members are better placed to be mentors. Participating in the scheme may mean that Chair/Board member needs to commit additional time to ARB-business.

7. Risk Implications

None identified.

8. Communication

ARB embraces equality, diversity and inclusion in a meaningful way. We are committed to building an organisation that represents a variety of backgrounds, perspectives and skills. The more inclusive we are, the better our work will be. We aim to provide leadership to the profession and maintain public confidence in the Architects Register by facilitating it to reflect the communities that architects serve. Our participation in the Cabinet Office and Public Chairs Forum Diversity Monitoring Scheme will assist in supporting those who are from underrepresented groups who have narrowly missed out on public appointments. This will contribute to broadening the diversity of public bodies' boards, including ARB's Board, in the future.

9. Equality and Diversity Implications

As identified within the paper.

10. Further Actions

Subject to the Board's agreement to the recommendation outlined in section 2, the Acting Chief Executive will contact the PCF/Cabinet Office and confirm that ARB would like to join the Diversity Mentoring Scheme.

The Acting Chief Executive and the Chair will agree whether the Chair should act as a mentor to the mentee/s that are matched with ARB or whether this should be allocated to a member of the Board.

The Acting CEO, subject to the success of this pilot, would like to explore a similar scheme for the non-executive roles within ARB. This could potentially increase the diversity of all of ARB's committees, panels and advisor groups.