



REQUEST FOR EXPRESSIONS OF INTEREST

**For Professional Services to the
safefood Knowledge Network
Programme**

safefood

7 Eastgate Avenue

Eastgate

Little Island

Co. Cork

T45 RX01

October 2022

Request for Expressions of Interest

1. Introduction

safefood invites expressions of interest from food chain experts to provide professional services to the **safefood** Knowledge Network programme 2022-2025, in accordance with the requirements specified in Section 5. Successful applicants will form a number of Expert Groups who will, together with the **safefood** Food Science Directorate, further develop the **safefood** Knowledge Network of food safety professionals across the farm-to-fork continuum on the island of Ireland. Prospective applicants must complete the application requirements which must be received by **safefood** by **4pm on Friday 28th October 2022**.

safefood was established in 1999 under the British-Irish Agreement Act and is one of the six North-South Implementation Bodies jointly governed by the British and Irish Governments. The remit of **safefood** is to promote awareness of food safety and healthy eating issues throughout the food chain on the island of Ireland, which includes the commissioning and funding of relevant research, the coordination of scientific cooperation including identifying and establishing laboratory linkages, public education and awareness campaigns, and the publication of independent reports of interest to consumers and other key stakeholders. **safefood** headquarters are located at 7 Eastgate Avenue, Eastgate, Little Island, Co. Cork, with an additional office in the Irish Life Centre, Abbey Court, Lower Abbey Street, Dublin. For more information on **safefood**, please see our web site at www.safefood.net.

2. The Knowledge Network Programme

safefood's responsibility for food safety promotion extends across the food chain from producers & processors to retailers and the final consumer. Achieving and maintaining the highest food safety standards is essential not only for public health protection, but also to maintain confidence in the food supply chain and to support the agri-food industry. The Knowledge Network programme was developed to support those working in food safety across the island of Ireland. It provides supports and services for people working in food production, processing, retail and catering, as well as those working to ensure regulatory compliance and to enhance food safety through research and education.

The Knowledge Network aims to encourage collaboration, knowledge-sharing and enhanced understanding between these professionals, supported by through events, briefings, workshops, newsletters and the Knowledge Network website, videos, podcasts and webinars. The next Knowledge Network Programme will run from June 2022 to June 2025 and will be supported by a number of groups of experts on specific areas of interest.

For more information on the **safefood** Knowledge Network please visit www.safefoodkn.net

The 2019-2022 Knowledge Network Programme

The 2019-2022 Programme was established in mid-2019, with an Expert Group of ten people with expertise in a range of food safety disciplines and backgrounds in different food sectors, including food service, food SMEs, behavioural science and food hypersensitivity.

- The Network has almost 3,700 members from across the island of Ireland
- From June 2019 to June 2022, the Network hosted 84 events attended by 3,139 people
- 36 editions of Network News were published, along with 9 editions of *The Food Chain* magazine and 20 'Future of Food' articles

3. Objectives of the Knowledge Network Programme 2022 - 2025

The objectives for the Knowledge Network programme for the next three years are:

- (1) To promote food safety by raising awareness and providing opportunities for the sharing and learning of best practice food safety knowledge, especially for food SMEs, across the island of Ireland.
- (2) To monitor developments and other challenges along the food chain, including technological advances, monitoring, surveillance, regulatory developments and on-going research both on the island and internationally.
- (3) Utilising the KN programme as (a) an accessible source of expertise for **safefood** with a view to exploring existing concerns and identifying emerging issues in food safety and enhance our in-house evidence base; and (b) to use the KN to raise awareness of **safefood** activities and enhance its profile in the overall public health promotion field.
- (4) To further develop multi-disciplinary and cross-jurisdictional cooperation and working relationships between food safety professionals operating in food safety laboratories and across food production, regulation, academia and other public bodies.

4. Details of Requirements

safefood will establish three Expert Groups to collaboratively guide the activities of the Knowledge Network. Each Group will be led by a designated member of the **safefood** Food Science Directorate and will be supported by a Network Administrator who will be responsible for Network event management & logistics, Network promotion, food safety information uploads onto the Network website, contributions to KN newsletters and also acting as secretariat to the Group.

A programme of activities based on priority food safety issues will be identified by these Expert Groups that shall operate for 18 months initially, with the flexibility to address other food safety issues that may

arise in the interim. **safefood** is seeking expressions of interest for professional services for up to twelve positions across the three Expert Groups. The three groups to be established will focus on:

- 1) Microbiological Food Safety
- 2) Food Hypersensitivity
- 3) Small food businesses in the catering/ food service and food manufacturing sectors.

4.1 Role specification for the Expert Groups

The professional services required of each Expert Group member will be:

1. To provide high level strategic and technical food safety advice and direction for the Knowledge Network, appropriate to the specific Group. Members will be expected to be fully up to date the food safety vulnerabilities and challenges relevant to their specific expertise.
2. To advise on new resources or services that the Network should include in its programme of activities.
3. To advise on appropriate research which **safefood** should commission to address food safety issues.
4. To advise on the most appropriate target audiences, based on food safety need.
5. To actively participate in the development and promotion of the Knowledge Network and its associated activities.
6. To contribute to the output of the Knowledge Network, e.g. events, information papers, etc., over the lifetime of the Expert Group (administrative support will be provided by **safefood**.)
7. To assist **safefood** in increasing the multidisciplinary and multi-sectoral membership of the Knowledge Network on an all-island basis.
8. To participate fully in the work programme of the Expert Group as appropriate.
9. To assist in the publication of eNewsletters and 'The Food Chain' magazine by advising topics for inclusion and subjects for interviews.
10. To use their own professional networks (including international networks and collaborations, if relevant) to access expertise in specific areas identified by the Expert Group and **safefood** for the benefit of the Knowledge Network programme of activities.
11. Prepare/develop/enhance Knowledge Network conferences and events. Specific inputs required include;
 - a. key guidance in regard to the types of conferences, events and training of most benefit in enhancing food safety behaviours;
 - b. direct involvement in drawing up of event programmes and speaker selection;
 - c. chairing, presenting at, or attending various Knowledge Network events and/or training throughout the year, as appropriate.

4.2 Expertise specification for Expert Group members

safefood wishes to invite expressions of interest from both the Republic of Ireland and the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland for the provision of the professional services detailed in section 5.1 above from suitably qualified individuals with the required professional expertise, experience and competencies. **safefood** is seeking expressions of interest for up to twelve positions across the three Expert Groups.

Applicants are expected to have substantial experience in one of the categories outlined below:

Category number	Category Name	Eligible professional expertise areas
1	Microbiological food safety	Extensive experience of guidance and advice on microbiological pathogens (including viruses) and food hygiene
2	Food Hypersensitivity	Food allergy, coeliac disease, food intolerance. Extensive experience of implementing practical guidance and advice on food allergen management
3	Small food businesses: catering/ food service, food manufacturing sectors	Extensive experience in working in/ with small food business, consumer and food safety standards, hygiene & food safety needs

5. Time commitment, remuneration and duration

The service requirement for members of the Expert Group shall be for a period of 18 months. There will be two half-day in-person meetings per year. Outside of these meetings, ad hoc bilateral meetings between individual Group members and **safefood** personnel will be held online or by telephone.

The service fee payable to Expert Group members shall be €1,500 per annum net of VAT in addition to vouched travel and subsistence expenses (these will not exceed civil service allowances). Please note that funding for successful Expert Group members will be provided through their employment authority for the provision of a professional service. It is not a contract of employment.

6. Evaluation of applications for professional services

safefood will ensure a confidential, fair and equitable evaluation of all eligible applications. These will be evaluated externally, and the outcomes of the evaluation will be communicated to the applicants.

Please note that where competencies and experience are deemed equal, gender balance as well as North-South representation are factors that will be taken into account when selecting members of the Expert Groups.

6.1 Qualifying criteria

Applicants will be initially evaluated by reference to the following qualification criteria:

1. Addressing in full the requirements set out in this document (section 4), and a stated ability to meet all requirements;
2. The inclusion of all information requested.

Only those applications which satisfy all of the above qualifying criteria will be considered for further evaluation.

6.2 Award criteria

Contracts for professional services will be awarded to the highest-scoring qualifying applications. These will be scored on the basis of the response to the Request for Expressions of Interest requirements, the relevant experience of the applicant and their competencies by applying the following award criteria (and descriptors):

Criterion 1: Meeting the Knowledge Network objectives

1. Demonstration of a strong knowledge and understanding of the food safety environment and infrastructure supporting the role specification (Section 4.1) and complementing the aims of the Knowledge Network (refer to 2. The Knowledge Network Programme);
2. A demonstrated experience in one or more of the aforementioned categories of professional expertise (section 4.2);
3. Demonstrable evidence of high level strategic and lateral thinking in order to promote and enhance awareness of food safety along the food supply chain on the island of Ireland;
4. Fostering cooperation, collaboration between key professionals and organisations in the food safety arena on the island of Ireland and beyond.

Criterion 2: Organisational and networking experience

- 1 Experience of participation in, and coordination of, multi-disciplinary groups of professionals and/or networks;
- 2 Experience of relevant committee and working group participation and leadership;
- 3 Experience of Cross-jurisdictional work.

Criterion 3: Technical expertise and experience in food safety subject area (service deliverables)

1. Experience in the provision and implementation of technical, innovative and operational advice and guidance around current and future challenges and issues in regard to food safety, including the identification of research opportunities, pertaining to at least one of the categories in section 4.2.

2. Experience in the development of fit-for-purpose scientific/technical newsletters, conferences and events;
3. Experience in food safety knowledge generation, information dissemination, policy formulation and the communication of scientific information or innovation;

Criterion 4: Professional competencies and qualities

1. The capacity to think and act both strategically and analytically;
2. A demonstrated ability for collaborative problem solving and a commitment to fully participate in the membership role;
3. Good judgement with a high level of integrity and responsibility.

7 Information Required

All applications must include the following:

- A Curriculum Vitae;
- A cover letter outlining how they meet the qualifying criteria for provision of the professional services listed above, and specifying which Group Category (section 4.2) for which they are applying;
- Completion of the 'Key Requirements Form' (Appendix 1)

All applications must be made electronically to: Linda Gordon, lgordon@safefood.net

Any queries should be submitted to:

- Microbiological food safety group: Mairead McCann, mmcann@safefood.net
- Food hypersensitivity group: James McIntosh, jmcintosh@safefood.net
- Small food business group: Linda Gordon, lgordon@safefood.net

The receipt of each application will be acknowledged electronically within three working days.

The Assessment Panel will make its recommendation(s) based on consideration of the documentation submitted. The *Cover Letter*, *Curriculum Vitae* and *Key Requirements Form* must clearly demonstrate how a particular set of skills, expertise and experience meet the Qualifying and Award Criteria.

Applications must be received by 4pm on Friday 28th October 2022. Late submissions will not be accepted.

8 Conditions of the Request for Expressions of Interest

- 1 **safefood** requires that all information provided pursuant to this Request for Expressions of Interest be treated in strict confidence by applicants;
- 2 Information supplied by applicants will, following a successful evaluation outcome, be treated as contractually binding. However, **safefood** reserves the right to seek clarification or verification of any such information;
- 3 Before any contract is awarded, the successful applicant will be required to provide a valid Tax Clearance Certificate from the Revenue Commissioners or HM Revenue & Customs;
- 4 **safefood** will not be liable in respect of any costs incurred by applicants in the preparation of proposals or any associated work effort;
- 5 Any conflict or potential conflict of interest must be fully disclosed;
- 6 Applications delivered late will not be considered. Incomplete applications may be rejected;
- 7 Applicants are advised that any responses supplied in respect of further information requested will be distributed to all other applicants who have participated in this Request for Expressions of Interest;
- 8 Funding for the successful applicants will be provided through their employment authority for the provision of a professional service. It is not a contract of employment;
- 9 **safefood** Knowledge Network contracts (including all payments) shall be issued and arranged only with the employment authority of the successful applicant, as specified in their Curriculum Vitae;
- 10 The decision of **safefood** will be final;
- 11 Award of contract may be subject to a successful clarification meeting with the applicant
- 12 The application should be emailed to on or before 4pm on Friday 28th October 2022.

9 Conduct and Conflicts of Interest

In regard to the professional services provided by the Expert Group, members must disclose any information or personal connections which, if their application was successful, could lead, or be perceived to lead, to a conflict of interest.

Appendix 1: Key Requirements Form

Name:

Service Category (Ref: Section 4.2):

Having read the **Qualifying** and **Award** criteria and having considered the logistics of the professional services required, for each of the areas below, please briefly (max 250 words for each) highlight specific achievements, contributions or expertise you have developed and consider relevant which clearly demonstrate suitability to meet the challenges of the requisite professional services.

Criteria 1: Meeting the Knowledge Network objectives

Criteria 2: Organisational and networking experience

Criteria 3: Technical expertise and experience in food safety subject area [Service Deliverables]

Criteria 4: Professional competencies and qualities
