



Job Description

Position Title	Senior Research Manager
Organisation Unit	Family Data, Studies & Society
Functional Unit	Longitudinal Delivery
Classification	Executive Level 2
Immediate Manager	Theme Longitudinal Head
Location	Melbourne, VIC
Review Date	June 2026

About AIFS

The Australian Institute of Family Studies (AIFS, or 'the Institute') is the Australian Government's key research body in the area of family wellbeing. It is an independent statutory authority established in 1980 under the Family Law Act 1975. The Institute is an agency within the portfolio of the Department of Social Services (DSS).

AIFS' approach to research is applied and policy relevant, coming from a tradition of social science and strengthened by our multidisciplinary expertise. We draw together expertise from a broad range of disciplines including sociology, psychology, social work, economics, political science, demography, law, public health and data science.

Our research is generated through a combination of AIFS initiated and commissioned projects.

Our AIFS initiated and led research allows us to respond to critical trends and emerging issues for families in Australia and contribute independent insights to inform policy and practice.

Our commissioned research for government departments and agencies addresses specific policy questions and program needs, drawing on our multidisciplinary research expertise and methodological rigour.

Purpose of the Position

The Senior Research Manager is a senior-level research leadership role at AIFS, responsible for overseeing the delivery of longitudinal studies and coordinating functional teams to produce high-quality, policy-relevant assets and outputs. The role provides stewardship of national longitudinal data assets, including content development and prioritisation, data quality, coherence across waves, external fieldwork delivery, and documentation and metadata that support current policy needs and long-term secondary use. It also translates AIFS's strategic research priorities into actionable, impactful work that informs government decision-making and contributes to improved outcomes for families and communities.

Working within a defined longitudinal program, the Senior Research Manager provides expert advice and coordinates study design, implementation, ethics and evaluation, while establishing fit-for-purpose governance to manage risk, quality and delivery. They ensure longitudinal operations, projects and contracts are delivered on time, within budget and scope, and to high standards of scientific integrity and policy relevance. The role shapes strategic direction and planning within projects, supports implementation of theme-level strategies, and represents AIFS with internal and external stakeholders—including senior government officials, policy makers, community organisations and the longitudinal research scientific community—to ensure studies are responsive to emerging policy needs, aligned with best practice, and maximise policy impact and data utilisation.

The Senior Research Manager leads business development by supporting funding proposals and identifying future research and data collection opportunities aligned with AIFS's strategic direction. In addition to project leadership and oversight, they build and sustain a collaborative and inclusive team culture, mentor and develop researchers and research managers, and work proactively with peers across the Institute to drive improvement, innovation and increased longitudinal data utilisation.

Diversity and inclusion

AIFS is committed to creating a diverse, inclusive, and respectful workplace where all staff feel valued and supported. The Senior Research Manager plays a key role in fostering an inclusive team culture that embraces diversity of thought, background, and experience. This includes:

- Promoting equity, inclusion, and cultural safety within study teams and across the Institute.
- Supporting inclusive recruitment, development, and retention practices.
- Ensuring study design and outputs reflect diverse perspectives and are responsive to the needs of all communities, including Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.
- Championing inclusive leadership and contributing to a positive organisational culture.

Key Capabilities

Responsibility	Tasks required to achieve key responsibilities
Strategic Leadership	• Contributes to strategy within projects. • Provides operational leadership and delivery. • Implements theme strategy through projects.
Policy Engagement	• Provides informed analysis of policy environment as relevant to their Study/Theme to inform the planning and delivery of work. • Demonstrates high level understanding of policy-relevant research and drives the delivery of policy-relevant outputs. • Makes a significant contribution to the management, preparation and coordination of complex inputs to policy formulation.
Research Excellence and Innovation	• Leads high-quality, policy-relevant research and evidence projects that align with the Strategic Research Agenda. • Ensures outputs meet quality standards. • Subject matter expertise in one or more sub-themes under AIFS' Strategic Research Agenda
Operational Oversight	• Leads and delivers projects of a technical nature, including specialist research. • Oversees project delivery, timelines, budgets and reporting and reports on time, cost and quality requirements to the Theme/Longitudinal Head. • Coordinates across projects within Theme/Study. • Researches, plans, implements, monitors and evaluates project or program initiatives across Themes/Studies. • Collaborate with the AIFS Privacy Team to incorporate privacy practices into all work
Stakeholder Engagement	• Builds relationships within and outside AIFS. • Engages and manages relationships with equivalent level stakeholders in government, sector and academia.
Business Development	• Drives and supports proposal development and delivery. • Addresses future Institute and stakeholder needs when initiating the development of new systems, procedures, policies, methodologies and practices.
Team Leadership	• Oversees researchers and project teams. • Operational leadership and quality assurance. • Mentors researchers.
Functional management	• Provide pastoral care for the function/study teams • Manages Research Managers performance including talent and succession planning

	• Develop professional development plan for the function • Liaises with the PMO to support workforce and resource planning and management. • Develops functional strategy and drives methodological capability uplift across AIFS • Manages and develops a functional area, outlining its purpose, governance and ways of working
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Essential Criteria

Qualifications	A higher degree of research in a relevant discipline (e.g. sociology, psychology, social work, economics, political science, demography, law, public health and data science).
Essential Skills, Knowledge & Experience	1. Senior expertise in survey methodology within longitudinal or lifecourse or similarly complex studies, with the ability to apply subject matter expertise to guide research design, ensure scientific rigour, and deliver high impact outputs and an enduring national data asset. 2. Drives methodological innovation to ensure the surveys relevance, scientific rigour, and AIFS status as managers of significant longitudinal data assets 3. Demonstrated understanding of the policy environment, and ability to deliver longitudinal survey content and evidence that is timely, relevant, and aligned with government priorities in the short and long term. 4. Demonstrated experience in leading the operational delivery of complex and/or multi-year research projects and surveys including scoping, planning, implementation, analysis and report writing within a policy-relevant context. Includes proven experience in managing complex surveys using contemporary project management frameworks and methods, adhering to relevant ethical, privacy, and other relevant national study obligations, sensitive issues around findings and reputational risk and ensuring that work runs to time, cost, quality, and scope requirements. 5. Strong strategic skills, with the ability to contribute to project-level strategy and provide high-level analysis of policy issues to inform research direction and survey development and outputs. 6. Proven ability to lead multidisciplinary and distributed study teams, coordinate across the groups, and foster a collaborative and inclusive team culture that supports professional development and high performance. 7. Excellent stakeholder engagement skills, including the demonstrated ability to liaise, consult, and negotiate with senior officials in government, industry, and community sectors to support organisational business development priorities. 8. Experience in business development, including supporting the preparation of funding proposals, identifying future research opportunities aligned to organisational priorities, and building and maintaining relationships with key stakeholders. 9. Strong communication and interpersonal skills, with the ability to represent their organisation externally, build relationships, leading through others, stewardship and integrity, managing risk and ambiguity, driving organisational improvement, exercising sound judgement under pressure and convey complex research findings to diverse audiences. 10. Commitment to diversity, inclusion, and culturally safe practices, with demonstrated experience in embedding these principles into research design, team leadership, and stakeholder engagement.
Key Duties	Under the direction on the Longitudinal Head: • managing major research projects, large scale surveys, programs and contracts, including setting clear direction, monitoring progress, managing risks, reporting to senior leaders and funders, responding to changes and delivering high-quality results • building and managing stakeholder relationships by providing information, survey methodological expertise and specialist advice to key stakeholders, including funding bodies, policy makers (in government and service provision agencies), governance and advisory groups, fieldwork providers and other contractors

	• leading and managing a team of researchers, survey methodologists, and data specialists responsible for delivering research projects, overseeing the roll out of the survey, and data processing including managing performance, guiding development and providing feedback • leading or contributing to the development of research proposals including collaborating with other AIFS groups, external organisations, and providing survey methods expertise for cross-team responses • managing relevant budgets and other resources in line with AIFS' obligations and procedures • undertaking research to contribute to the achievement of organisational goals • communicating research findings and representing the Institute at relevant conferences, webinars, workshops, teleconferences, meetings and other events • contributing to the senior leadership and strategic direction of OneAIFS.
Key Relationships	Internal • Director, AIFS • Group Head, Family Data, Studies & Society • Group Head, Child & Family Wellbeing, Safety & Harms • Theme & Longitudinal Heads • Managers in research and corporate teams • PMO • All Institute staff External • Commonwealth Government stakeholders • State and Territory Government stakeholders • Sector and industry organisations and their stakeholders • Academic institutions and researchers

* See Job Pack for further information.