

Position Description:

Program Manager – Safe on Country Fund

Position title	Program Manager – Safe on Country Fund
Program	Strengthening Families and Communities – Safe on Country Fund
Classification / salary	\$117,356 to \$126,251 plus superannuation
Tenure	Full-time, fixed term to 30 June 2028 (subject to funding)
Location	Desert Knowledge Precinct, Mparntwe/Alice Springs NT, with regular travel to remote communities
Reports to	Chief Executive Officer, Desert Knowledge Australia
Direct reports	Grants and Contracts Manager; Administration & Finance Officer;
Delegations	Financial, procurement and contract management delegations as approved by the DKA Board
Funding source	Australian Government Department of Social Services grant (program-funded position)

About Desert Knowledge Australia

Desert Knowledge Australia (DKA) is a statutory corporation of the Northern Territory established under the Desert Knowledge Australia Act 2003 (NT). Our purpose is to encourage and facilitate learning, research and sustainable economic and social development relating to deserts and arid lands. DKA is governed by a First Nations–majority board appointed by the NT Government for their knowledge of and deep connection to desert Australia. DKA is based at the Desert Knowledge Precinct on Arrernte country, 9kms south of the centre of Mparntwe/Alice Springs.

Find out more about DKA at www.dka.com.au

About the Safe on Country Fund

DKA is administering the Australian Government's Strengthening Families and Communities – Safe on Country Fund in Central Australia: a flexible funding model operating to 30 June 2028 that will on-fund community-led projects to reduce family and domestic violence, strengthen families, and improve safety and wellbeing on Country.

Funding decisions will be led by a Safe on Country Fund Community Panel – a majority Aboriginal committee of the DKA Board, with representation from across the Alice Springs, MacDonnell and Central Desert regions. The program gives practical effect to the National Plan to End Violence against Women and Children and the National Agreement on Closing the Gap, and is delivered in coordination with a Capability Uplift Provider and the Department of Social Services (DSS).

Position purpose

The Program Manager leads the delivery of the Safe on Country Fund in Central Australia, ensuring the program is community-led, culturally safe, well governed and accountable. The role manages the funding relationship with the Department of Social Services, serves as the Executive Officer for the Safe on Country Fund Community Panel, and leads a small team responsible for engagement, grants administration and program support across the Alice Springs, MacDonnell and Central Desert regions.

Key responsibilities

- Provide strategic leadership and overall accountability for the delivery, performance and continuous improvement of the Safe on Country Fund, ensuring program outcomes, contractual obligations, financial performance and reporting requirements are achieved.
- Represent DKA in negotiations with the Department of Social Services and other government stakeholders, managing contractual performance, funding negotiations, variations, risk issues and strategic engagement.
- Provide high-level governance support to the Safe on Country Fund Community Panel, ensuring robust decision-making frameworks, accountability mechanisms, conflict-of-interest management and alignment with community-led governance principles.
- Develop and implement strategic engagement approaches that strengthen participation by Aboriginal communities and organisations across Central Australia and ensure equitable access to funding opportunities.
- Establish and manage strategic partnerships with the Capability Uplift Provider, Aboriginal organisations, regional stakeholders and government agencies to maximise program impact and minimise duplication.
- Direct and oversee all grant-making activities, ensuring transparent, equitable and compliant assessment, contracting, monitoring and acquittal processes consistent with Commonwealth requirements and best-practice grant administration.
- Lead program governance, risk, audit and compliance functions, ensuring effective controls, fraud prevention measures, escalation processes and organisational assurance mechanisms are maintained.
- Ensure risk controls and mitigation strategies are aligned with DKA's risk appetite and organisational wide practices.
- Manage the program budget and associated financial resources under delegated authority, including financial forecasting, procurement approvals, contract management, expenditure decisions and acquittal reporting, ensuring value for money and compliance with Commonwealth and DKA financial requirements.
- Lead, develop and supervise program staff, contractors and consultants, fostering a high-performance and culturally safe workplace while ensuring effective workforce planning, performance management and professional development.
- Provide high-level advice and recommendations to the CEO, Board and Safe on Country Fund Community Panel on program performance, emerging risks, funding priorities, policy developments and opportunities for continuous improvement.
- Provides strategic advice to the CEO and Board on future opportunities and develops an organisational wide strategy to develop DKA's capabilities and capacity as a regional funding broker.
- Contribute as a member of DKA's leadership team to DKA's organisational wide planning and performance.

- Embed trauma-informed, culturally safe practice across all program activities, and support the wellbeing of staff and Panel members working with sensitive family safety content. Undertake other duties consistent with the classification and purpose of the position, as reasonably directed.

Selection criteria

Qualifications

Relevant tertiary qualifications in public policy, community development, social work, business, governance, project management, public administration or a related discipline; or extensive equivalent experience managing complex government-funded programs, grant-making activities, community development initiatives or funding intermediary functions.

Additional training in grants management, trauma-informed practice, cultural safety, family and domestic violence, program evaluation or financial management would be well regarded.

Essential

- Demonstrated ability to exercise delegated authority, make sound decisions and provide strategic advice in a complex governance and accountability environment.
- Demonstrated high level experience managing complex, multi-stakeholder programs, managing grant funded programs, including budget, risk and contract management.
- Demonstrated experience managing grant funded programs from a funders' point of view or experience working as, or with, a funding intermediary or brokerage organisation.
- Demonstrated ability to work respectfully, effectively and safely with Aboriginal people, organisations and communities, with a sound understanding of Central Australian cultural and service delivery contexts (or the ability to rapidly acquire it).
- High-level stakeholder engagement and communication skills, including the ability to communicate across cultures, languages and literacy levels, and to build trusted relationships with government, community organisations and Elders.
- Experience supporting boards, committees or other governance bodies, including preparation of papers, management of conflicts of interest and sound record-keeping.
- Strong understanding of Commonwealth grants administration, compliance and accountability requirements, or demonstrated capacity to quickly develop this understanding.
- Demonstrated leadership of small teams, including the ability to recruit, develop and support staff in a remote, high-demand environment.
- Understanding of trauma-informed and culturally safe approaches to family and community safety and wellbeing.
- Current C class driver's licence and willingness to travel to remote communities, including overnight stays and travel on unsealed roads in a 4WD vehicle.

Desirable

- Postgraduate qualifications in management, public policy, business administration, governance or a related field.
- Formal training or accreditation in grants management, program evaluation, project management, procurement, risk management, trauma-informed practice, cultural safety, family and domestic violence prevention, or financial management.
- Experience in the domestic, family and sexual violence, community safety, or community services sector.
- Lived experience of, or strong familiarity with, remote Central Australian communities.

Special requirements

- Satisfactory National Police Check.
- Completion of a conflict-of-interest declaration and compliance with DKA's Code of Conduct and policies.

How to apply

Applications are to be submitted via the form at the link below by August 31, 2026:

→ <https://wkf.ms/4hQWO8r>

For a confidential discussion about the role, contact Jimmy Cocking, DKA CEO on 08 8959 6012.

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people are strongly encouraged to apply. DKA values the knowledge, connections and lived experience that Aboriginal people from Central Australia bring to this program.

DKA is committed to child safety and to providing a culturally safe workplace. Employment is subject to the satisfactory completion of pre-employment screening.