



# Job Description

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| Position Title    | Senior Research Officer                    |
| Organisation Unit | Child and Family Wellbeing, Safety & Harms |
| Functional Team   | Program and Policy Evaluation              |
| Classification    | APS 5                                      |
| Immediate Manager | Research Manager                           |
| 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 Officer is an APS 5 role that contributes to the delivery of research and evaluation projects within a defined area of responsibility. Working under limited direction, the role applies sound judgement, initiative and undertakes research and evaluation activities to support rigorous, policy-relevant outputs that inform government decision-making and improve outcomes for families and communities.

The role undertakes evaluation capability building, manages competing priorities and coordinates allocated project components to agreed timeframes, budget and quality standards. It provides advice and input on evaluation design, methodology, ethics, governance and risk within established frameworks, and contributes to maintaining scientific integrity, consistent project delivery and continuous improvement in evaluation practice.

Within the Program and Policy Evaluation team, the role contributes to a diversity of fit-for-purpose, rigorous evaluation approaches and activities, including evaluation design, application of appropriate methods, as well as data analysis and synthesis of evidence to inform policy and program development. The role builds productive stakeholder relationships, supports engagement and business development activities, contributes to a collaborative and inclusive team culture, and may provide guidance to less experienced staff.

## Diversity and inclusion

AIFS is committed to creating a diverse, inclusive, and respectful workplace where all staff feel valued and supported. The Senior Research Officer contributes to an inclusive team culture by working respectfully with colleagues and stakeholders, supporting diversity of thought, background and experience, and applying inclusive practices within their area of responsibility. This includes:

- Promoting respectful, inclusive and culturally safe ways of working within project teams and stakeholder engagement activities.
- Supporting fair and inclusive team practices, including contributing to onboarding, knowledge sharing and the development of less experienced staff where required.
- Contributing to research and evaluation activities that consider diverse perspectives and are responsive to the needs of different communities, including Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.
- Modelling APS Values and AIFS behaviours by acting with respect, integrity and professionalism, and contributing to a positive organisational culture.

## Key Capabilities

| Responsibility                     | Tasks required to achieve key responsibilities                                                                                                                                                                                                                                         |
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| Strategic Leadership               | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Supports delivery of AIFS priorities, coordinating project outputs, and linking work to strategic objectives while identifying broader impacts and risks.</li></ul>                                                                            |
| Policy Engagement                  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Maintains strong knowledge of relevant policy areas, undertaking research and analysis, and contributing to policy-relevant outputs that inform stakeholders and support policy alignment.</li></ul>                                           |
| Research Excellence and Innovation | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Undertakes research and analysis on evidence projects, contributing to innovation and business improvement strategies, and processing and presenting data in formats suitable for scientific interpretation.</li></ul>                         |
| Operational Oversight              | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Coordinates and undertaking project management activities, contributing to research and analysis for project work, and analysing and presenting qualitative and/or quantitative data to support interpretation and project delivery.</li></ul> |
| Stakeholder Engagement             | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Maintains productive relationships across projects, engaging stakeholders, and supporting internal and external networks to facilitate collaboration and delivery.</li></ul>                                                                   |
| Business Development               | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Coordinates and contributing to funding proposals and tenders, developing plans and objectives for short-term work, and contributing to team-based strategic planning for longer-term initiatives.</li></ul>                                   |
| Team Leadership                    | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Undertakes quality assurance and being accountable for tasks and decisions while providing guidance to support staff performance and development.</li></ul>                                                                                    |

## Essential Criteria

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| <b>Qualifications</b>                               | 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).                                                                                                                                                                          |
| <b>Essential Skills, Knowledge &amp; Experience</b> | <ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. <b>High-level evaluation and methodological capability</b><br/>Demonstrated experience in, or capabilities to support, application of a diversity of evaluation approaches and appropriate methodologies to support rigorous, policy-relevant evaluation activities across the evaluation lifecycle.</li></ol> |

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|                   | <p>a. Contribute to the design and delivery of evaluation activities, including program logic and theory of change, process, impact and outcomes evaluation.</p> <p>2. Support a range of evaluation approaches (e.g. participatory, realist and mixed-methods) to support robust and context-sensitive findings.</p> <p>a. Develop or contribute to evaluation frameworks, measurement tools and data collection strategies to support scientific rigour and fit-for-purpose design.</p> <p>3. Provide specialist advice on evaluation methodology, system design and process mapping to support program improvement and policy development.</p> <p>4. Participate in economic evaluation activities, including cost–benefit and value-for-money analysis where appropriate and with the guidance of wider expertise across the organisation.</p> <p>5. Contribute to synthesis and cross-project learning activities to strengthen the evidence base, where this is supported by relevant projects or wider organisational resourcing.</p> <p>6. <b>Policy insight and application</b><br/>Demonstrated understanding of the policy environment and the ability to deliver evaluation evidence that is timely, relevant and aligned with government priorities, including translating findings into practical policy and program insights.</p> <p>7. <b>Contributing to complex evaluation projects</b><br/>Proven experience or capabilities to support the delivery of complex evaluations in policy and program contexts, including scoping, design, implementation, analysis and reporting.</p> <p>a. Strong project management skills, including the ability to deliver work to time, cost, quality and scope requirements.</p> <p>b. Experience coordinating evaluation components such as stakeholder engagement, data collection and advisory group support.</p> <p>8. <b>Analytical and problem-solving capability</b><br/>Strong analytical skills, with the ability to interpret and integrate evidence from a range of sources and provide sound advice on complex policy and program issues.</p> <p>9. <b>Communication and stakeholder engagement</b><br/>Well-developed communication skills, with the ability to clearly convey complex evaluation concepts and findings to diverse audiences, and prepare high-quality reports, briefs and presentations.</p> <p>10. <b>Teamwork and staff support</b><br/>Proven ability to work collaboratively across projects, contribute to a positive and inclusive team culture, and support the development of less experienced staff through guidance, mentoring and quality assurance.</p> <p>11. <b>Stakeholder liaison</b><br/>Well-developed stakeholder engagement skills, including the ability to liaise, consult and build productive working relationships with government, sector and community stakeholders, as appropriate to each project and with the guidance of the Project Lead.</p> <p>12. <b>Contribution to business development</b><br/>Experience contributing to funding proposals, identifying opportunities for future work aligned with organisational priorities, and supporting relationships with key stakeholders.</p> <p>13. <b>Commitment to diversity, inclusion and culturally safe practice</b><br/>Demonstrated commitment to diversity, inclusion and culturally safe practice, with experience applying these principles in evaluation work, team interactions and stakeholder engagement.</p> |
| <b>Key Duties</b> | <p>Under the direction of the Research Manager:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Contribute to the <b>delivery of program and policy evaluation activities</b> in line with project objectives and AIFS priorities.</li> <li>• Provide <b>advice and input on evaluation design, methodology, data collection and analysis, ethics and governance</b> within established frameworks.</li> <li>• Contribute to the <b>design and implementation of a diversity of evaluation components</b>, including program logic, process, impact and outcomes evaluation, and support economic analysis where appropriate.</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                            |

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|                          | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Coordinate and deliver allocated project activities</b> to support achievement of agreed timeframes, budget, scope and quality requirements.</li> <li>• Support <b>governance, risk, resource planning and reporting processes</b> for evaluation projects.</li> <li>• Assist in <b>translating evaluation findings</b> into clear, evidence-based and policy-relevant outputs.</li> <li>• Build and maintain <b>productive working relationships with internal and external stakeholders</b>, including government, sector and community partners, as appropriate to each project and with the guidance of the Project Lead.</li> <li>• Contribute to <b>stakeholder engagement activities and represent AIFS</b> in external forums where appropriate and under guidance.</li> <li>• <b>Support business development</b> activities, including contributing to funding proposals and identifying opportunities aligned with organisational priorities.</li> <li>• Provide <b>guidance and support to less experienced staff</b> as required and contribute to a collaborative and inclusive team culture.</li> <li>• Contribute to <b>continuous improvement in evaluation practice</b> across projects.</li> <li>• Support the application of <b>diversity, inclusion and culturally safe practices</b> in evaluation work and team interactions.</li> </ul> |
| <b>Key Relationships</b> | <p><b>Internal</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Director, AIFS</li> <li>• Group Head, Family Data, Studies &amp; Society</li> <li>• Group Head, Child &amp; Family Wellbeing, Safety &amp; Harms</li> <li>• Theme &amp; Longitudinal Heads</li> <li>• Managers in research and corporate teams</li> <li>• PMO</li> <li>• All Institute staff</li> </ul> <p><b>External</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Commonwealth Government stakeholders</li> <li>• State and Territory Government stakeholders</li> <li>• Sector and industry organisations and their stakeholders</li> <li>• Academic institutions and researchers</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                         |

\* See Job Pack for further information.