

VSA Assignment Description

Assignment Title	Speech Language Therapy Advisor
Country	Cook Islands
Location of Partner Organisation	Rarotonga
Partner Organisation	Ministry of Education
Duration	12 months
Sustainable Development Goals	



41664

1. Partner organisation overview

The Cook Islands Education Master Plan's vision is to "build the skills, knowledge, attitudes and values of Cook Islanders to put their capabilities to best use in all areas of their lives".

The Cook Islands Ministry of Education aims to ensure an education system which is inclusive, equitable, fair and just, with a teaching curriculum which is accessible by all children of the Cook Islands.

It looks to achieve this through an education system that identifies and includes students with special learning needs, implements appropriate programmes and monitors their progress within a culture of understanding.

This applies to all students who are at risk of not developing to their full educational potential or at risk of not achieving the major objectives of the curriculum. It recognises and provides support for students with disabilities, specific learning and behavioural difficulties as well as those who are gifted and talented.

2. Assignment overview

Teachers and teacher aides in the Cook Islands are working alongside students who have speech conditions which are impacting their ability to participate fully and successfully in education. This includes students involved in Inclusive Education as well as mainstream students.

There are now students needing urgent support in the speech therapy area.

The Ministry of Education's Inclusive Education Advisor supports teachers and teacher aides by assessing and researching possible remedial programmes to help in this area but the needs are greater than the capacity to fully support teachers in this way. There is a need for a professional speech therapist to assess, plan, develop and implement more effective programmes that will allow individual students to improve their speech.

A VSA volunteer will:

- Support teachers and teacher aides in identifying, assessing, planning and developing individual speech therapy programmes as per students' unique needs, and support staff and parents to follow and facilitate them
- Model effective, research based speech therapy strategies and ethical behaviour
- Support and train teachers and teacher aides in the development of speech therapy resources and teaching aides to assist students in this area



3. Goal/outcomes/outputs

Goal

Teachers are able to identify and plan effective, evidence based speech therapy programmes for students in their care, alongside teacher aides and parents who have been consulted and included in planning individualised goals and programmes.

Community awareness around speech impediments, and attitudes towards inclusivity and acceptance are increased, and inter-ministerial, NGO and other agency collaboration is fostered.

Outcome 1

Students with speech therapy needs receive the support they need to flourish in the education setting they are based.

- Provide strategies, in service training, modelling and support for teachers with assessment, planning, developing and delivering effective speech therapies with full home/school collaborations.
- Work alongside teachers, teacher aides and advisors to develop, plan and implement in-service training modules for teachers, teacher aides, school management teams, parents/caregivers and the wider community to become more aware, accepting and able to assist students with speech therapy needs.
- Work alongside staff to develop better channels of communication, collaborations and referrals which are sought with other ministries, NGOs and agencies
- Work alongside staff to develop resources which are made available to all, including Pa Enua (Outer Islands) by online access including recorded Professional Development sessions, Zoom sessions and links to appropriate resources and materials

Outcome 2

Teachers are supported to access and develop resources to best address the speech therapy needs of students in their care

- Provide modelling and training to teachers and teacher aides in the use of appropriate resources for their students
- Support teachers and teacher aides in the identification and development of appropriate resources
- Develop and deliver relevant training on the above resources

Outcome 3

Community awareness around speech therapy is improved and positive attitudes are developed.

- Community workshops and information packages are developed to allow better availability of services and channels of referrals.
- Collaborations between MoE and other agencies are sought, planned and implemented to improve effectiveness of referrals and programmes.
- Positive attitudes are encouraged through the use of social and other media.
- Successes are celebrated
- Training and developing a counterpart to ensure sustainability of programmes and interventions

4. Reporting and working relationships and capacity building

The volunteer will report directly to, and will be accountable to, the Division Manager: Language and Teaching.

They will be guided in their day-to-day planning by the Inclusive Education Advisor.



On a day-to-day basis, the volunteer will predominately work with the Inclusive Education Advisor, teachers and teacher aides.

The volunteer and the Ministry of Education will have an ongoing relationship with the VSA programme manager in terms of assignment monitoring, reporting, professional advice and personal support.

As needs on the ground may change over time, the volunteer is encouraged to review and update the Assignment Description on arrival in consultation with the partner organisation and VSA Programme Manager. By their very nature, development situations can involve significant change, so it is advisable that the volunteer periodically review and reflect on the Assignment Description throughout the Assignment to ensure the best development outcomes are being achieved.

5. Selection criteria/position requirements

Person specifications (professional)

Essential

- Tertiary qualification in Speech Language Therapy
- Proven experience working within the speech therapy field
- Experience developing programmes, resources and materials for students with speech therapy needs

Desirable

- Knowledge and experience in providing teachers, teacher aides and parents/caregivers the skills to develop resources appropriate to their student's needs
- Experience in policy review and planning
- Ability to develop community workshops, pamphlets and other forms of media to promote speech therapy and improve the attitudes of the wider population

Personal specification (personal)

Essential

- Pleasant and friendly demeanor
- Ability to work effectively in a team
- Ability to listen and understand local Cook Island concerns and particular needs
- Ability to adapt to Cook Island needs and limitations such as internet access, access to resources, etc.
- Ability to provide effective Professional Development face to face, with a school staff and to the wider community.

6. VSA Essential Attributes

- Commitment to volunteering, to VSA and to the partner organisation
- Cross cultural awareness
- Adaptability and a willingness to approach change or newness positively
- Able to form good relationships, both personally and professionally, with work colleagues and in the community
- Resilience and an ability to manage setbacks
- Initiative and resourcefulness
- An ability to facilitate learning through skills exchange



7. Country Context

For more information about the Cook Islands, see <https://vsa.org.nz/about-vsa/countryregion/cook-islands>

Additional information

Residency status

VSA volunteers must be New Zealand citizens or have New Zealand permanent residency status, and currently living in NZ.

Pre-departure briefing

As part of the volunteer's contract, successful candidates will be required to take part in a pre-departure briefing course run by VSA in Wellington and complete all required pre-reading.

Final appointment

Final appointment will be subject to satisfactory medical and immigration clearances (costs covered by VSA), partner organisation acceptance, and successful completion of the pre-departure briefing course.

Family status

VSA supports partners to accompany volunteers on assignments of six months or longer. However volunteers with accompanying dependents will not be considered for this assignment.

Fundraising

Volunteers are encouraged to fundraise at least \$1000 with the support of VSA's fundraising team. Accompanying partners are encouraged to raise the same amount. All funds raised will help VSA keep its programmes in action and support future volunteers.

Vaccination requirements

Potential volunteers are advised that VSA's insurers require volunteers to be inoculated, prior to departure, in accordance with the instructions of VSA's medical adviser. VSA covers the cost of any required vaccinations.

Children's Act

While on assignment, VSA volunteers may be required to work with children and/or may choose to participate in informal activities in their own time that involve interactions with children (such as coaching teams or teaching English). VSA is committed to the protection of vulnerable children and adults, which also includes meeting our commitment under the Children's Act 2014.

The information requested during the application process is necessary to assist VSA to determine applicant suitability to work and/or interact regularly with children, and is part of a series of pre-selection checks undertaken on all applicants for VSA assignments.

Volunteer package

The volunteer's package includes the following:

Reimbursements and grants

1. Volunteers will receive an establishment grant of NZ\$750 to help them set up in their country of assignment. For volunteers with an accompanying partner (whether or not that partner is also a VSA volunteer), VSA will pay an establishment grant of NZ\$1,100 per couple.
2. For two year assignments, the volunteer will receive a rest and respite grant of NZ\$1,000 on completion of the first year.
3. A resettlement grant of NZ\$200 will be paid for each month the volunteer is on assignment. This is payable on completion of the assignment.
4. The volunteer will receive a monthly living allowance of NZD \$1,300



Accommodation

Basic, comfortable furnished accommodation will be sourced by VSA. In some circumstances volunteers may be asked to share accommodation.

Airfares and baggage allowance

VSA will provide the volunteer with economy airfares to and from New Zealand for their assignment plus a baggage allowance.

Insurance

VSA will provide travel insurance to cover baggage and personal property, and non-routine medical expenses for the duration of the assignment. Further details of the insurance cover will be provided during the volunteer pre-departure briefing.

Utilities

VSA will reimburse volunteers reasonable expenses for household utilities while on assignment.

Final terms and conditions relating to the specific volunteer assignment will be confirmed in a personalised volunteer contract.

