


# VSA Assignment Description

Assignment Title	Monitoring Evaluation Research & Learning Adviser
Assignment Modality	Standard / In-country
Assignment Number	42163
Country	Samoa
Location	Upolu Island
Partner Organisation	Ministry of Agriculture and Fisheries
Duration	12 months (with a view to extend)
Sustainable Development Goals	

## 1. Partner Organisation Overview

The Samoa Agricultural and Fisheries Sector Plan (AFSP) 2022/23 – 2026/27 articulates the national vision of *'a sustainable sector for food, nutritional and income security, prosperity, wealth, and resilience'*. The sector, through the Ministry of Agriculture and Fisheries (MAF) as the focal point, has a focused commitment to achieve five sector strategic outcomes within this timeframe:

1. Resilient and sustainable food, agriculture, fisheries, and aquaculture systems are enhanced.
2. Food and nutritional security is increased.
3. Rural transformation fostered.
4. Private sector capacity and export contributions improved.
5. Enabling environment for the sector development strengthened.

MAF's mandate is to raise awareness and promote ways of sustainable farming and fishing activities that will maintain food security for years to come. The ministry is the focal point in providing support to farmers and fishers through policy development, research, training, and resource management, and at the same time, promotes sustainable practices to increase productivity and economic resilience. The ministry aims to increase exports and strengthen local and international partnerships and market access.

The Policy, Planning, Sector Coordination & Communication Division (PPSCCD) within MAF is responsible for the Sector Plan, Corporate Plan, Samoa Food System Pathway, Samoa Agriculture and Fisheries Climate Change Policy, and their alignment to the SDGs. They are responsible for overseeing the Monitoring, Evaluation, Research and Learning (MERL) framework for the ministry and across the sector. They have identified a priority need for assistance and expertise to effectively monitor and evaluate all the activities and projects in the ministry/sector.

## 2. Assignment Overview

The PPSCCD unit currently faces challenges in its mandate to oversee and effectively manage all of the above. There are significant gaps in the extensive work that is vital for the team, which greatly impacts on delivery of outcomes as outlined below;

- The shortage of staff on the ground is a major challenge given the mandate this team is tasked to carry out to ensure monitoring and evaluation the MERL processes are effective. The lack of

skilled and trained personnel in this area for the Agricultural Sector and the ministry presents challenges that can hinder the work our team is mandated to do.

- Challenges with data collection practice. Diverse projects and programmes within the sector and ministry have inconsistencies in the data collection processes and practices. Issues and questions arise regarding the accuracy and timeliness of data, which at times impede effective and thorough evaluation. It will be very helpful to have expert advice on ways to improve these processes by implementing better methods to collect and accurately record data.
- MERL templates are created in Excel, which is easy to understand, but our team recognises the need to improve the visualization of data/information provided using Excel. This will, in turn, improve how we present and collect our data/information using Excel, as well as provide and receive feedback.
- Effective planning skills are greatly needed in our team, given the increasing responsibilities in monitoring and evaluation for the ministry and sector (ie. analysis and evaluation of information collected).
- Difficulties in ensuring MERL activities align with national agricultural and fisheries policies and frameworks. Infrequent reviews of MERL systems have led to outdated practices and missed opportunities for necessary improvements. Such challenges impact the adaptation of programs based on MERL feedback due to the rigid processes and lack of specialised capabilities for the PPSCCD in the delivery of their mandate.

### 3. Goal/Outcomes/Outputs

#### Goal

The Agriculture and Fisheries Sector will have robust and effective MERL processes and practices in place to track progress and measure impact and inform strategic decisions

#### Outcome 1

Review the current MERL processes and practices for the agricultural and fisheries sector, as outlined in the MERL framework in the Agriculture and Fisheries Sector Plan 2022-27.

#### *Working alongside the local team, the volunteer will:*

- Review current MERL processes and assess for efficiency
- Identify gaps and present recommendations for consideration to ensure more effective MERL processes are in place
- Review the data collection processes in place to see where there is a need for improvement – provide recommendations
- Provide ongoing capacity building and training to the staff in this area

#### Outcome 2

Review and assess the relevancy of agricultural and fisheries programmes and projects to ensure alignment with the Sector Plan.

#### *Working alongside the local team, the volunteer will:*

- Assess the relevance of the projects and programmes, considering the strategic goals in the Sector Plan
- Assess the indicators in the Sector Plan to ascertain which ones have been implemented and where improvement is needed
- Identify the programmes and projects that drive the most value and long-term sustainability for the Sector
- Develop an action plan that outlines the necessary steps to realign projects with the business objectives (ie. shifting focus areas or implementing new processes).
- Provide ongoing capacity building and training on the job with the staff in this area

### Outcome 3

Review the alignment of programmes and projects to the Pathway for the Development of Samoa (PDS) 2021-26: *Strategic Outcome 2; Diversified and Sustainable Economy, Key Priority 7; Agriculture, Fisheries and Aquaculture Productivity*

#### *Working alongside the local team, the volunteer will:*

- Evaluate the current projects and future proposals that align well with the Sector's strategic goals and contribute towards the PDS.
- Prioritise the programmes and projects that best reflect the Sector's core values and long-term goals guided by the PDS.
- Establish a decision-making framework that systematically evaluates and prioritizes alignment, considering impact, resources, alignment with vision, timing, and risk analysis.
- Provide ongoing capacity building and training on the job with the staff in this area

## 4. Reporting, Working Relationships and Capacity Building

Capacity building and shared learning can be achieved through the following ways:

- Training and workshops – individuals and MAF staff, community, and stakeholders
- Mentorship and coaching – MAF staff and community members
- On-the-job training through hands-on experience and shared learning during field visits
- Collaborations internally and externally, where relevant – information sharing sessions
- Feedback and evaluation mechanisms to inform specific areas for training
- Recommendations of online courses and e-learning opportunities in MERL

The volunteer will report directly to the Assistant Chief Executive Officer and will be accountable to the Chief Executive Officer. On a day-to-day basis, the volunteer will predominantly work with the Senior Planning Officer and relevant personnel.

The volunteer and the Ministry of Agriculture and Fisheries 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 reviews and reflects on the Assignment Description throughout the Assignment to ensure the best development outcomes are being achieved.

## 5. Selection Criteria/Position Requirements

### Professional Specifications

#### Essential

- A relevant Tertiary qualification in Governance/Public Policy, Monitoring and Evaluation or similar
- Strong analytical skills – proven experience in data management and analysis
- Extensive Project Management experience of 5+ years
- Ability to use appropriate research methods to collect accurate and reliable data
- Experience and technical knowledge in Agriculture and Fisheries
- Excellent computer skills and knowledge of MS Excel & MS Word
- Excellent communication skills – both oral and written

### **Desirable**

- Experience working in a policy and planning unit
- Experience working with results frameworks or logical frameworks
- Experience in stakeholder engagement
- Excellent written and editing skills

### **Personal Specifications**

#### **Essential**

- Ability to be flexible and adaptable in a new working environment and context with limited resources
- Mature and experienced in working with people from different cultures
- Easy to work with and open to constructive discussions of their work
- Excellent problem-solving abilities
- Ability to work in a high-pressure environment
- Ability to work and communicate well with others
- Willingness to learn and understand the Samoan way of life
- Friendly and open - supportive and inspiring

#### **Desirable**

- Openness to learn the Samoan language
- Patience and understanding

## **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 Samoa, see [VSA in Samoa](#).

Refer also to the following links for greater context;

- Untold History of Samoa: [Untold Pacific History | Episode 3: Samoa - NZ's Colonisation of Samoa & the Mau Movement | RNZ - Bing video](#)
- Programme in Samoa: [MFAT NZ & Samoa-4YP.pdf](#)
- Samoa Government Website: [Government of Samoa \(samoagovt.ws\)](#)
- Samoa Tourism Authority: [Samoa Tourism Authority - Corporate Website](#)
- Pocket Guide of Samoa: [A Brief History of Samoa](#) - [Samoa Pocket Guide](#)
- Samoa Pocket Guide: [Samoa Pocket Guide - Samoa's #1 Travel Guide](#)
- Beautiful Samoa: [Uncover the History of Beautiful Samoa | Samoa Tourism](#)

## **8. Living and Working Situation**

The VSA Samoa office will source basic, safe and comfortable furnished accommodation before the volunteer arrives in the country. On rare occasions, the volunteers may be asked to share accommodation. This can be discussed more when the volunteer has been selected and has initial contact with the Programme Manager and Country Coordinator.

The MAF office is located in the TATTE Building at Sogi. The Policy, Planning, Sector Coordination and Communication Division (PPSCCD) is located. It is in the Apia area and close to the main bus station, taxi services, restaurants, and supermarkets, and approximately a 5-minute drive to the hospital.

Within the workplace, there are working cubicles, each equipped with a desk, chair, desktop, and telephone. Everyone has access to the internet and the office work email. The rooms have air conditioning and are regularly serviced by the building's cleaning contractor.

The PPSCCD comprises 14 staff and is expected to have new recruits within the next 3-6 months to join the team. The coordination of the Agriculture and Fisheries Sector Plan is now the new responsibility of the Division. In PPSCCD, we value teamwork and promote a healthy working environment.

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## **Additional Information**

### **Standard Assignment (12 months or more)**

#### **Residency status**

VSA volunteers must be New Zealand citizens or have New Zealand permanent residency status, and currently live 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**

VSA funding stakeholders are both the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade (MFAT) and donors. We ask volunteers and accompanying partners to fundraise to help cover the cost of sending volunteers throughout the Pacific and beyond. Fundraising can be as simple as doing something you enjoy with a group or friends, and our Fundraising team is available to help you every step of the way.

#### **Vaccination requirements**

Potential volunteers are advised that VSA's insurers require volunteers to be vaccinated before departure, following 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 in determining

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. The volunteer may be entitled to an establishment grant to help them set up in their country of assignment, and a rest and respite grant after a specified period of active service in-country to encourage the volunteer to take a break away from the immediate assignment location. These grants depend on the length and location of the assignment. The volunteer's contract will specify any grant entitlements.
2. The volunteer will receive a monthly living allowance of SAT \$1900.

#### *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 for 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.*