



VSA Assignment Description - UniVol

Assignment Title	Legal Research Assistant
Assignment Modality	In-Country UniVol
Assignment Number	42179
Country	Samoa
Location	Apia
Partner Organisation	Office of Attorney General
Duration	9-10 Months
Sustainable Development Goals	 

1. Partner Organisation Overview

The Office of the Attorney General of Samoa operates under the Constitution of the Independent State of Samoa 1961 and the Attorney General's Office Act 2013. Its primary functions include managing and supporting the Attorney General in carrying out constitutional, statutory, and common law duties, in addition to providing legal services to the Head of State, Prime Minister, Cabinet, Ministers, and Government.

Comprising four legal Divisions and a Corporate Service Division, the Office handles various tasks such as providing sound legal opinions to the Government, representing the Government's interests in civil proceedings, drafting and reviewing government legislation, and reviewing legal agreements and procurement contracts, and institute and conduct criminal proceedings. The Office ensures that the government of the day can implement its policies and carry out its responsibilities lawfully and in line with the Constitution. The Attorney General holds the sole discretion to initiate, conduct, or discontinue criminal prosecutions.

The Office's experienced legal team is crucial in ensuring the rule of law is upheld and in providing the executive Government with responsive, top-notch legal services and support. In addition to these core legal functions, the Office actively promotes transparency, accountability, the rule of law, and good governance.

2. Assignment Overview

The Office of the Attorney General of Samoa needs volunteer assistance to support and strengthen the extensive work in the Civil Litigation and Opinions Division of the Office of the Attorney General. A Legal Research Assistant will be based with the Civil Litigation team and will conduct legal research on a variety of Civil Litigation matters. Special focus will be research findings on specialised legal matters and legal opinions that required the Office legal opinion within specified timeframes. Time and staff constraints are a challenge for the Office, hence the need for this area to be strengthened, to ensure that the legal opinions are well informed and supported.

The volunteer will be able to share findings from thorough research on specific Civil Litigation matters and case laws, which will assist the team significantly in preparing legal documents and reports to support the legal services provided by the Office of the Attorney General.

The legal documents and reports may be official letters to ministries, settlement negotiations on behalf of government entities, documents to assist in court hearings such as case tables, etc... Specific matters may be in the legal areas of tort, property, employment, contract, etc...

It is important to note that the volunteer may undertake work that falls under that of other divisions (Legislative Drafting, Prosecution, Commercial). This is due to the nature of an under resourced environment, and also to limitations where the volunteer cannot read/write Gagana Samoan. This provides a valuable opportunity to experience a wide range of legal work. There is some freedom to discuss with the Office any specific legal matters the volunteer would like to work on.

3. Goal/Outcomes/Outputs

Goal

The Office of the Attorney General receives high-quality legal research assistance and support, enabling them to continually improve and strengthen their legal services for the government.

Outcome 1

The Office of the Attorney General of Samoa has enhanced its legal research practices to be more effective, responsive, and aligned with the needs of the Civil Litigation and Opinions Division, enabling a more efficient provision of legal services, including advice and support.

Working collaboratively with the Civil Litigation and Opinions Division to;

- Conduct in-depth legal research to support Litigation strategies and legal opinions on various matters.
- Assist the team in identifying statutes, regulations, case law, constitutional law, administrative law, etc., to strengthen the government's (client) position.
- Analyse statutes, regulations, and case law to support legal arguments and decision-making.
- Prepare legal memorandums, reports, and other documents as required.
- Prepare official correspondence with other government entities, NGOs, law firms, and others as needed.
- Assist in drafting legal opinions and briefs on various matters referred to by the Attorney General or Assistant Attorney General.
- Maintain and organise legal documents and research materials.
- Attend meetings and assist in case preparations or any civil matter as needed.
- Capacity building through sharing of knowledge and skills on the job with the team.

4. Reporting, Working Relationships and Capacity Building

The volunteer will report directly and be accountable to the Assistant Attorney General (AAG) - Civil Litigation and Opinions Division. On a day-to-day basis, the volunteer will predominantly report to the Associate Solicitor of the Civil Litigation and Opinions Division or the Senior State Solicitor as their supervisor. The volunteer will work with any member of the team specified by the supervisor/s, and this will likely change for each legal matter.

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

- Bachelor's degree in Law.
- Strong research and analytical skills.
- Excellent written and verbal communication skills.
- Strong interpersonal skills.
- Proficiency in Microsoft Office Suite.
- Attention to detail.
- Ability to work independently and as part of a team.

Desirable

- Prior experience in legal research or related field.

Personal Specifications

Essential

- Ability to work unsupervised.
- Effective time management.
- Patience, tolerance, empathy, and flexibility.
- Willingness to work in a different environment and cultural context.
- A preparedness to work with limited resources within a challenging environment.

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;

- Untold History of Samoa: [Untold Pacific History | Episode 3: Samoa - NZ's Colonisation of Samoa & the Mau Movement | RNZ - Bing video](#)
- New Zealand Aid 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
- Beautiful Samoa: [Uncover the History of Beautiful Samoa | Samoa Tourism](#)

8. Living and Working Situation

VSA Samoa team will source basic, comfortable, and furnished accommodation in a safe location, that is within the budget of the programme, prior to the volunteer's arrival.

The Office of the Attorney General is located on Level 5 of the TATTE Building, on the main street of Apia, and on the opposite side of the bus terminal. There is security for the building and the volunteer will have a desk and access to internet for work purposed

Additional Information – UniVol Assignment

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

Partners or dependent children cannot accompany UniVols.

Fundraising

VSA funding stakeholders are both the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade (MFAT) and donors. We ask volunteers 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, 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. 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.