

JOB DESCRIPTION – SENIOR RESEARCH OFFICER

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| Position | Senior Research Officer |
| Organization | Consumer Council of Fiji |
| Tenure | Three Years (Contract) |
| Duty Station | Suva |
| Reporting to | Manager Research & Policy Analyst |

1.0 Primary Purpose

To support the Research & Policy Analysis Division in conducting research in a manner that ensures effective and efficient policy change in the interest of consumers. To further assist in conducting market surveillance and policy analysis in a manner that ensures effective and efficient policy change in the interest of consumers.

2.0 Organizational Context of Position

The Consumer Council of Fiji (CCF) is a statutory body established under the Consumer Council of Fiji Act 1976 (Cap 235). The Council is expected to play a positive role in achieving a market place where consumers are well informed, confident and protected from unlawful, deceptive, misleading or otherwise, objectionable practices. The prime function of the Council is to drive real change for consumers based on these five themes-

- Delivering consumer knowledge, skills and information to all
- Championing and protecting the interests of all consumers
- Assist consumers in resolving complaints with traders and service providers
- Driving change (policy/procedures/practices) to benefit consumers
- Enabling consumers to make responsible choices

3.0 Council's Role

The Council's roles are to:

- Improve consumers' ability to make informed decisions;
- Solve consumer complaints through Alternative Dispute Resolution (ADR), Advisory services and legal representation;
- Advise the Minister on such matters affecting the interests of the consumers;
- Collect, collate and disseminate information in respect of matters affecting the interests of consumers;
- Support or maintain legal proceedings initiated by consumers, where such support is deemed necessary;
- Make representations to the government or to any other persons or organisations on any issues affecting the interests of consumers;
- Conduct research and investigations into matters affecting consumers;
- Provide debt management and consumer credit advisory services to financially illiterate consumers;
- Conduct market surveillance to establish product prices and compliance with product labelling and safety requirements including misrepresentation
- Work in partnership with local, regional and international organizations to identify and understand emerging consumer issues, conduct research and campaign on issues in solidarity to change local and global practices.

4.0 Responsibilities of the Position

The key accountabilities of the Senior Research Officer:

4.1 Research and Policy Development

- Conduct high-quality research on consumer issues, including market trends, systemic challenges, and emerging concerns, to support evidence-based advocacy.
- Draft research papers, issue briefs, policy recommendations, and position statements on key consumer matters for internal and external stakeholders.
- Collaborate with the Manager Research and Policy Analyst in identifying and prioritizing research projects aligned with the Council's goals and strategic direction.
- Analyze data from consumer complaints and market surveys to identify trends and systemic issues impacting consumers.
- Contribute to the development of voluntary guidelines, standards, or recommendations for industries to enhance consumer protection.

4.2 Complaints Handling, Dispute Resolution and Mediation

- Receive, register and handle the complaints flagged to the Research and Policy Analysis Division.
- Enter and update complaints and advisory on the complaints management system.
- Assess the complaints based on information and evidence provided and offer appropriate and relevant advice to consumers of all the options available in resolving the complaints, including referring cases to relevant consumer protection authorities and possibly for Small Claims Tribunal actions, if parties do not agree to resolution.
- Actively participate in mediation sessions, providing expert advice and support to ensure fair resolutions.

4.3 Data Collection, Analysis, and Reporting

- Plan and execute data collection activities, including surveys, focus groups, trader visits, and stakeholder interviews.
- Ensure accurate analysis and interpretation of data to inform research outputs and policy recommendations.
- Prepare detailed reports and presentations on research findings for internal use, stakeholders, and public dissemination.
- Maintain an organized and up-to-date database for all research and policy documents.

4.4 Support for Advocacy and Campaigns

- Assist the Campaigns Information and Media Division in preparing fact sheets, reports, and communication materials based on research findings.
- Use research outputs to inform advocacy initiatives, consumer awareness campaigns, and World Consumer Rights Day events.
- Collaborate with the Campaigns and Media teams to translate research findings into accessible content for consumers.

4.5 Project Management and Donor Support

- Support the planning, implementation, and monitoring of donor-funded research projects, ensuring alignment with objectives and timelines.
- Assist in the preparation of funding proposals and donor reports by providing accurate data and project updates.
- Participate in regional and international research initiatives in coordination with global partners.

4.6 Stakeholder Engagement and Collaboration

- Work closely with regulatory bodies, government agencies, and industry representatives to share research findings and advocate for consumer-friendly policies.
- Participate in stakeholder consultations, workshops, and focus groups to gather input for research and policy work.
- Develop and maintain collaborative relationships with local and regional organizations working on consumer issues.

4.7 Market Surveillance and Monitoring

- Conduct market surveillance, trader visits, and service evaluations to identify compliance gaps and consumer protection issues.
- Prepare detailed reports on market conditions, highlighting areas for intervention or policy development.
- Ensure timely submission of findings to support regulatory recommendations and advocacy initiatives.

4.8 Team Collaboration and Capacity Building

- Provide technical support and guidance to junior staff within the Division on research methodologies and data analysis techniques.
- Share knowledge and skills through training sessions and mentoring programs.
- Support the Manager Research and Policy Analyst in fostering a collaborative and efficient team environment.

4.9 Communication and Knowledge Dissemination

- Present research findings in meetings, workshops, and stakeholder events, ensuring clarity and accessibility.
- Contribute research content for the Council's website, publications, and digital platforms to increase public engagement and awareness.
- Assist in publishing research outcomes in local, regional, and international forums to enhance the Council's visibility.

4.10 Operational Support

- Assist in the development and implementation of the Division's annual Work Plan and Business Plan.
- Monitor and evaluate the effectiveness of ongoing research projects and provide recommendations for improvement.
- Ensure compliance with the Council's policies and procedures in all research activities.

5.0 Key Selection Criteria

5.1 Qualifications

- A Degree in Education, Social Science, Statistics, Economics, and Development Studies is required.

5.2 Technical Expertise

- A minimum of 4 years demonstrated experience in research work is required.
- A commitment to consumer issues and good knowledge of relevant consumer legislations nationally and internationally.
- Must possess excellent IT skills.
- Should have excellent analytical and research skills.
- Knowledge of investigation techniques and the process of mediation.

- Good understanding of the Consumer Council Act and its statutory functions.

5.3 Key Skills and Competencies

- Demonstrated ability to organise work, manage time, determine priorities and meet deadlines.
- Commitment to social justice and the mission and vision of CCoF.
- Experience in planning and managing research work;
- Excellent communication skills (oral and written).
- Ability to multi – task.
- Good problem solving attributes.
- Self - Starter, self - organized and motivated.
- Understanding of Council's obligations to statutory agencies.
- Strategic thinker, innovative, performance driven and an effective decision maker.
- Must be professional and ethical.
- Demonstrated ability to work under minimum supervision and heed directives.
- Adheres to the CCoF communication standards, formats, procedures and style.
- Establishes and maintains positive communications with key internal and external partners by seeking input and feedback.
- Shows respect for different attitudes, knowledge and approaches.
- Coordinates own work with that of the team to meet agreed priorities and deadlines.
- Places the team's agenda before any personal agenda.
- Ensures personal decisions are based on accurate and objective data.
- Considers the positive and negative impacts of decisions before making them.
- Contributes to continuously improve the quality and relevance of information sharing in areas of personal expertise, in support of decision-making processes.
- Keeps abreast of current developments in own area of specialization and brings new ideas to the team.
- Seeks actively to improve programmes and services by continuously exploring future possibilities.
- Treats sensitive or confidential information appropriately.
- Must have integrity and insight suitable for a Senior Research Officer.

6.0 Contacts

This position has regular contacts with the following organizations:

- Consumer International (UK)
- Consumer International- Kuala Lumpur
- Consumers Korea
- Australian Consumers Association (Choice)
- FOMCA
- Consumer Association of Fiji
- Government Ministries/Departments
- Relevant Statutory Organizations
- Consumer Network
- Fijian Competition and Consumer Commission
- Ministry of Commerce, Trade, Tourism & Transport
- Commercial Organizations
- Bureau of Statistics
- Fiji Revenue & Customs Services
- Industry Groups and Professional Organisations

- Various Traders and Respondents to complaints.
- Other Consumer Protection Agencies.

7.0 Challenges and Impact on Organization Results

The challenges facing the position holder include the development of effective communication with the consumers, traders and service providers. It also requires building relationships with other organizations particularly consumer protection agencies, Government ministries and relevant statutory bodies. The incumbent has to develop and maintain knowledge of existing and emerging business practices and how these impact both positively and negatively on consumers. The appointee needs to be strongly consumer-focused and, frequently needs to prioritize and manage multiple tasks/demands set by circumstances. The incumbent is also required to regularly update his/her knowledge and understanding on consumer protection laws and practices. Taking a humble approach in understanding the plight of every consumer (whatever their state of mind or socio economic background) and rendering the best service possible. The employee has to develop and maintain knowledge of monopolies and multinational companies to understand the strategies used which may not be fair to the consumers. Other challenges arise from the very tight decision-making deadlines imposed by consumers, respondents and other stakeholders. The incumbent is expected to take a positive approach to these challenges and develop creative/innovative approaches to handle them. Lateral and strategic thinking is often required to come up with effective and achievable approaches. The incumbent needs to be strongly consumer-focused and, frequently needs to prioritise and manage multiple tasks/demands set by circumstances.

8.0 Organisation Structure

Immediate supervisors: Manager – Research & Policy Analyst

| Positions Reporting To You | No of Staff Reporting to Them |
|----------------------------|-------------------------------|
| None | None |