JOB DESCRIPTION

NOVAS
Housing | Health | Recovery

Job Title:	Head of Advocacy, Research & Learning	Post Holder:	Vacant
Reports To:	Chief Executive Officer	Location:	National Office, Limerick or Regional Office, Dublin
Salary:	This role is attached to a defined salary scale which ranges from €77,089 to €96,275 and appointments are made depending on experience.		

Purpose of the Job

The Head of Advocacy, Research & Learning is a leadership position responsible for advancing NOVAS advocacy, research, communications and organisational learning priorities.

The postholder will lead the development and coordination of NOVAS research programme, public policy advocacy and engagement with relevant statutory, academic and voluntary sector partners. They will ensure that NOVAS advocacy and organisational development are informed by research, evidence, service experience and the lived and living experiences of clients and tenants, through trauma informed practice.

This role will provide strategic leadership in organisational learning and development by identifying emerging training needs, skills and knowledge gaps, and opportunities for training and professional development that align with the organisation's strategic objectives. The role will also oversee the auditing and monitoring of organisational training compliance, working collaboratively with relevant Leadership Team and Senior Management colleagues to ensure appropriate corrective action where any areas of non-compliance are identified.

The Head of Advocacy, Research & Learning will coordinate monthly all-staff Town Hall Meetings, along with external communications, publications and any organisational events delegated to them by the CEO. The post holder will have responsibility for preparing media materials, briefings, the publication of NOVAS annual report, and development of strategic plans, working closely with the CEO to ensure consistent organisational messaging.

As a member of the Leadership Team, the Head of Advocacy, Research & Learning will contribute to strategic planning, organisational development and the delivery of NOVAS mission and objectives.

Environment of the Job

NOVAS is a not-for-profit organisation and Approved Housing Body, we work with single adults, couples and families and who are homeless or at risk of being homeless. We provide a range of services and accommodation. Our first service was established in Limerick in 2002 which was a temporary low-threshold emergency homeless accommodation, and we have grown from there. We now have over 300 staff, and more than 30 services in Limerick, Dublin, Clare, Kerry, Cork and Tipperary including emergency homeless accommodation, transitional homeless accommodation, social housing and community-based services for tenancy sustainment, homelessness prevention, mental health and recovery.

NOVAS is a Trauma Informed Practice Organisation, and the principles of collaboration, diversity, respect and trust are embedded in our way of working together.

Our services are provided through support of our partners in local government through the Local Authorities, HSE, and other donors and funders.

Delegation and Reporting

The Head of Advocacy, Research & Learning reports directly to the CEO and is a member of the Senior Leadership Team.

The postholder has delegated responsibility for the coordination and delivery of NOVAS research programme, public policy advocacy, communications and relevant events, together with strategic oversight of organisational learning and development, including the identification of training needs, development opportunities and the monitoring of training compliance.

The postholder will work collaboratively with the CEO and other members of the Leadership Team to identify priorities, develop organisational responses and ensure that activities align with NOVAS Strategic Plan.

The postholder will provide reports and updates to the CEO, Board of Directors and relevant Board Sub-Committees as required.

All decisions and activities will be informed by NOVAS mission and values, the best interests of clients and tenants and the effective and responsible use of organisational resources.

Challenges

The Head of Advocacy, Research & Learning will operate within a complex and evolving policy and service environment, requiring an ability to respond to emerging issues while progressing longer-term organisational priorities.

The role involves working with sensitive information and engaging with people who may have experienced trauma, homelessness, addiction and social exclusion. The postholder must demonstrate empathy, professionalism, sound judgement and an understanding of trauma-informed approaches.

The postholder will be required to manage competing priorities, coordinate multiple projects and maintain effective relationships with a diverse range of internal and external stakeholders.

As an organisation substantially supported by public funding, NOVAS places significant emphasis on accountability, transparency and the effective use of resources.

Key Accountabilities	
Accountability	Achieved by
Advocacy & Public Policy	▪ Monitor and analyse national and local policy developments affecting homelessness, housing, health, addiction, social inclusion and related areas. ▪ Develop and coordinate NOVAS policy positions, submissions, consultation responses and advocacy materials. ▪ Prepare NOVAS annual Pre-Budget Submission, post-budget analysis and other relevant policy responses, as they arise, in a timely manner. ▪ Represent NOVAS on relevant local, national and European networks, working groups, committees and policy platforms. ▪ Develop and maintain relationships with statutory agencies, government departments, elected representatives, academic institutions and voluntary sector partners. ▪ Collaborate with sector organisations and representative bodies to advance shared advocacy priorities. ▪ Work closely with the CEO to identify and progress strategic advocacy opportunities. ▪ Ensure that NOVAS advocacy is informed by research, organisational evidence and the lived and living experiences of clients and tenants.
Research & Evidence Development	▪ Lead and coordinate NOVAS research programme, ensuring alignment with organisational priorities and the needs of clients and tenants. ▪ Identify research opportunities in collaboration with the Housing, Operations and other relevant departments. ▪ Develop and maintain partnerships with academic institutions, researchers and relevant national and European research networks. ▪ Commission, coordinate and oversee external research consultants, including project deliverables, timelines, tenders, budgets and dissemination.

	▪ Oversee the work of the Research & Information Officer, supporting the collection, analysis and presentation of organisational data. ▪ Promote the use of research and evidence to inform service delivery, strategic planning, advocacy and organisational improvement. ▪ Identify research funding opportunities and support the development of applications for national and European research programmes. ▪ Coordinate NOVAS participation in relevant collaborative research projects. ▪ Lead the preparation and publication of the NOVAS Annual Report, working collaboratively with relevant departments. ▪ Ensure research findings are communicated effectively to staff, management, clients, tenants, external stakeholders and policymakers. ▪ Promote meaningful client and tenant participation in research and ensure research activities reflect NOVAS's commitment to Trauma Informed Practice.
Organisational Learning & Development	▪ Monitor emerging training trends, evidence-based practice and professional development opportunities relevant to NOVAS services and staff. ▪ Identify potential gaps in organisational knowledge, skills and learning through research, engagement with departments, sector networks and emerging policy developments. ▪ Communicate identified learning needs, training opportunities and relevant developments to the appropriate departments to inform their planning and response. ▪ Work collaboratively with HR, Housing, Operations and other departments to promote organisational learning and continuous improvement. ▪ Identify opportunities for partnerships with educational institutions, professional bodies and training providers.

	▪ Support the development and dissemination of learning arising from NOVAS research projects, pilot initiatives, service evaluations and trauma-informed practice programmes. ▪ Contribute to the development of learning resources, seminars, workshops and knowledge-sharing initiatives aligned with organisational priorities. ▪ Promote opportunities for staff to engage with relevant research, emerging evidence and developments in professional practice. ▪ Provide strategic leadership in organisational learning and development by identifying emerging training needs, skills and knowledge gaps, and opportunities for training and professional development that align with the organisation's strategic objectives ▪ Oversee the auditing and monitoring of organisational training compliance, working collaboratively with relevant Leadership Team and Senior Management colleagues to ensure appropriate corrective action where any areas of non-compliance are identified. *Responsibility for mandatory training compliance, individual staff development plans and the implementation of departmental training programmes will remain with the relevant departments. The Head of Advocacy, Research & Learning will provide an organisational perspective on emerging learning needs and opportunities.*
Events, Networks & External Engagement	▪ Lead the planning, coordination and delivery of relevant organisational events, including report launches, research seminars, conferences and stakeholder engagement events. ▪ Coordinate event programmes, speakers, invitations, communications and logistical arrangements, delegating tasks where appropriate. ▪ Represent NOVAS at relevant conferences, seminars, sector meetings, networks and external forums.

	▪ Develop and maintain relationships with key stakeholders, academic partners, statutory bodies and voluntary sector organisations. ▪ Identify opportunities for collaboration, partnership and knowledge exchange that support NOVAS strategic priorities. ▪ Promote NOVAS work, research and achievements through relevant external platforms and professional networks.
Leadership, Management & Organisational Responsibilities	▪ Contribute to the strategic direction, leadership and effective management of NOVAS as a member of the Senior Leadership Team. ▪ Provide effective line management, supervision, support and development to the Research & Information Officer and Head Office Receptionist. ▪ Oversee the work of external research consultants and other relevant project partners. ▪ Manage departmental budgets, resources and expenditure within delegated authority. ▪ Support the effective administration and coordination of National Office functions within the postholder's remit. ▪ Develop departmental work plans and objectives aligned with the NOVAS Strategic Plan. ▪ Monitor progress against agreed departmental priorities and provide regular reports to the CEO. ▪ Prepare and present relevant reports to Board Sub-Committees and other governance structures as required. ▪ Work collaboratively with other departments to support organisational priorities and improvement initiatives. ▪ Promote a positive, respectful and accountable working environment consistent with NOVAS values and Trauma Informed Practice. ▪ Ensure compliance with relevant organisational policies, procedures, data protection requirements and health and safety obligations.

Person Specification

Essential Criteria

Documentary evidence of qualifications and eligibility will be confirmed at the end of any recruitment process, candidates who do not possess the essential requirements, on the date of application will not be offered a position. It is the responsibility of the applicant to ensure they meet the essential criteria of the person specification.

The appropriate candidate will demonstrate:

- A relevant third-level qualification, preferably at master's level, in social policy, social sciences, research, public policy, communications or a related discipline.
- 3 years+ of senior management experience
- Personnel and project management experience.
- Significant experience in research, public policy, advocacy or a related field.
- A strong understanding of the Irish public policy environment, particularly in relation to homelessness, housing, health or social inclusion.
- Experience of developing research reports, policy submissions, publications or evidence-based organisational materials.
- Experience of managing staff, projects or external partnerships.
- Excellent written communication, analytical and presentation skills.
- Strong interpersonal skills and the ability to develop effective relationships with a range of stakeholders.
- Experience of representing an organisation or professional body in external meetings, networks or forums.
- Excellent organisational and project management skills, with the ability to manage competing priorities.
- Strong IT and digital communication skills.
- A commitment to the values and mission of NOVAS and an understanding of Trauma Informed Practice.
- A full driving licence and access to transport for work-related travel.

Desirable Criteria

It would be an advantage for the candidate to have:

- Experience working at senior management level within the voluntary, housing, health or social care sectors.

- A postgraduate qualification in a relevant discipline.
- Experience of designing, commissioning or managing research projects.
- Experience of managing external research consultants or academic partnerships.
- Experience of securing research funding or participating in national or European funded projects.
- Experience of identifying organisational learning needs or coordinating knowledge-sharing initiatives.
- Experience of organising conferences, seminars, report launches or other significant events.
- Experience of preparing press releases, media briefings or other external communications.
- Experience of managing departmental budgets and resources.
- Familiarity with the National Quality Standards Framework for Homeless Services, HIQA standards or Approved Housing Body Regulatory Authority standards.

The postholder will be expected to:

- Work in accordance with NOVAS's mission, values, policies and procedures.
- Promote equality, diversity, inclusion and Trauma Informed Practice.
- Maintain appropriate confidentiality and comply with data protection requirements.
- Participate in supervision, performance development and relevant training.
- Contribute positively to the Senior Leadership Team and wider organisational culture.
- Undertake other duties appropriate to the seniority and nature of the position, as reasonably assigned by the CEO.

This job description provides an outline of the principal responsibilities of the role. It is not intended to be exhaustive and may be reviewed periodically in response to organisational needs and strategic priorities.

NOVAS Employment Benefits	
NOVAS is committed to attracting and retaining the best talent in service of our clients and tenants and values the hard work and commitment of our staff. Detailed below are a range of benefits you receive as a NOVAS employee.	
Support & Supervision	Every employee will have regular planned one-to-one meetings with their line manager as well and Team Meetings and Monthly All Staff Town Hall meetings in order to ensure you are connected to and supported by your colleagues and the organisation.
Learning & Development	NOVAS will fully fund a wide range of training programmes required role specific including First Aid, Fire Safety, Manual Handling, Trauma Informed Practice.
Career Progression	NOVAS believes in supporting the development and career path for our staff and develop skills for role changes, Leadership Preparation and Management Development.
Salary Scales	NOVAS has defined salary scales and has committed to awarding annual increments to staff depending on sustained funding.
Annual Leave	26 Days annual leave plus bank holidays.
Pension	A direct contribution pension with a 5% employer and employee contribution totalling 10%.
Employee Assistance Programme	Our Employee Assistance Programme provided by Inspire Wellbeing gives staff access to free confidential counselling and a suite of online mental health and wellness tools.
Further Education Support	With the help of your line manager you can apply for financial support, study leave, or exam leave days to complete external professional qualifications to help further your career.
Sick Pay	2 Weeks full and 2 weeks half sick pay certified.
Maternity Leave	18 weeks full pay which can be pro rata across duration.