General Manager, Programs

Position Description

1. Position details

Item	Detail
Position title	General Manager, Programs
Organisational area	SAWCAN Executive
Reports to	Chief Executive Officer
Direct reports	Cancer Care Program Manager, Culture Care Connect Project Manager, Clinical Support Registered Nurse, Elder and Disability Program Lead, Tackling Indigenous Smoking Project Manager
Employment type	Fixed-Term Contract.
Award or agreement	Health Professionals and Support Services Award 2020 (MA000027)
Classification and level	Support Services Employee-Level 9
Location	Eyre Peninsula and Far West Coast of South Australia. Ceduna, Port Lincoln, Whyalla, Yalata, Oak Valley or Adelaide
Travel expected	Regular travel across the region, including overnight stays. Intra and interstate travel is required.
Financial and HR delegations	Financial delegation of $5,000 within the annual budget approved by the Board. Approves timesheets and leave for direct reports in line with the Delegations policy.
Date approved	October 2026
Next review date	October 2027, or earlier if the program structure or funding changes

2. About SAWCAN

The South Australian West Coast ACCHO Network (SAWCAN) is a regional collaborative body made up of Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Organisations across the Eyre Peninsula and Far West Coast of South Australia, a region stretching around 1,300 kilometres from Whyalla to the Western Australian border.

SAWCAN is member driven. Our Board is made up of the CEOs of our member services, and our role is to support their work rather than direct it. We work with ACCHOs across the region to

strengthen local delivery, share learning, coordinate regional approaches and advocate on shared priorities.

Our staff work across a large geographic region, often at a distance from each other. We rely on people who can organise themselves, communicate openly, work independently and maintain strong relationships across communities and services.

3. Purpose of the position

The General Manager, Programs provides strategic leadership and operational oversight of SAWCAN's programs and projects. The role makes sure programs are delivered well, on time and within budget and that what they deliver matches the health priorities of the region.

The role leads and develops the programs team. That means coaching program managers, building their project management and leadership capability, and giving them the direction and support to run their own programs well across a workforce that is spread out and often works at a distance.

The role also carries SAWCAN's contract obligations for the programs it holds. The General Manager works with funding bodies so deliverables and reports are met, brings program data together to show what is working and uses regional evidence to support advocacy and policy work.

Member ACCHOs remain responsible for their own services, workforce and clinical governance. The General Manager, Programs does not manage ACCHO staff or local service delivery. The role leads SAWCAN's regional programs, supports local delivery and holds SAWCAN's accountability to funders.

4. Role scope

	What this covers
This role is responsible for	• Strategic leadership and operational oversight of all SAWCAN programs and projects. • Delivery of programs on time, within scope and within approved budgets. • SAWCAN's contract obligations for the programs it holds, including funder deliverables and reporting. • Leading, coaching and developing the programs team. • Program evaluation and using regional data to show impact and support advocacy. • Identifying priority community health needs and leading regional roadmaps to respond to them. • Policy development related to SAWCAN programs and projects. • Day-to-day financial management of program budgets within delegation. • Identifying program risks, managing them where possible and escalating what cannot be resolved.

5. Key relationships and decision making

Relationship	Who	Purpose
Reports to	Chief Executive Officer (CEO)	Supervision, direction, escalation and workload
Direct reports	Program managers and program leads across the SAWCAN programs portfolio	Supervision, coaching, capability building, work planning and performance
Internal	All SAWCAN staff and teams, including: • Communications Team • Operations Team • Programs Team	• Approved travel bookings, SAWCAN branding, marketing, social media and public facing material. • Day-to-day internal operations, human resources, IT, data analytics and research. • Health, wellbeing and community service delivery related business.

Relationship	Who	Purpose
Participating services	Member ACCHO CEOs, business and program managers, and program staff	Program delivery, regional coordination, local barriers and improvement
External	Funding bodies including NACCHO and SA Health, AHCSA, government agencies, partner organisations and research partners	Contract obligations, deliverables and reporting, partnerships, policy and regional advocacy

Decision making

The General Manager, Programs decides how SAWCAN programs are delivered day to day. This includes program procedures and processes, how staff time and resources are allocated within approved budgets, the content and structure of program reports, task allocation and development opportunities for direct reports, and staff travel within program budgets. Financial decisions sit within a $5,000 delegation inside the approved annual budget.

Changes to organisational strategy, program scope or direction, contractual arrangements or funding are referred to the Chief Executive Officer. So is anything carrying significant organisational, clinical or reputational risk, and any commitment outside approved budgets or delegation.

6. Key responsibilities

Responsibility area	What this looks like in practice
Program oversight and delivery	• Provide strategic leadership and operational oversight of all SAWCAN programs and projects. • Make sure programs are delivered on time, within scope and within approved budgets. • Support program managers to develop and maintain program plans, including milestones, timelines and performance measures. • Monitor progress and provide regular updates to the CEO, the Board and member services. • Identify risks and challenges in program delivery early and put practical strategies in place to manage them. • Take ownership of operational issues within the programs portfolio, making timely decisions, identifying practical solutions and escalating matters to the CEO where necessary.
Contract and funder management	• Manage the contracts for the SAWCAN programs within this role's responsibility and make sure contractual obligations are met. • Work with funding bodies so deliverables are met and reports are submitted on time. • Review and negotiate contract terms so they fit SAWCAN's objectives and the needs of the region. • Keep the CEO informed early where a contract, deliverable or funding position is at risk.
Leading and developing the team	• Lead and manage the programs team, providing direction, coaching and mentoring. • Build capability in project management and leadership so program managers can run their own programs well. • Hold regular supervision and the Annual Reflection, Review and Planning Conversation with direct reports, and set clear development goals. • Foster a positive and productive working culture across a team that is spread across the region. • Address staff performance, conduct and workplace concerns promptly, fairly and professionally, including having difficult conversations and following through on agreed actions

Responsibility area	What this looks like in practice
Evaluation, data and reporting	• Lead program evaluation, collecting and analysing program data and using what it shows to improve delivery. • Prepare program reports for the CEO, the Board, funders and external stakeholders. • Provide quarterly written reports to the Board covering the work, successes, challenges and risks. • Make sure reporting shows both what programs are doing and what difference they are making. • Develop and share case studies of good practice across the region.
Regional priorities and planning	• Working with the CEO to identify priority community health needs through consultation with member services and analysis of regional data. • Lead the development of regional roadmaps to respond to those priorities. • Work with member services and government agencies to put the roadmaps into practice. • Support the implementation of the SAWCAN Strategic Plan.
Advocacy, policy and partnerships	• Use regional data to advocate for the health needs of Aboriginal communities across the region. • Present evidence-based recommendations to influence policy and resource allocation at local, state and national level. • Lead policy development related to SAWCAN programs and projects, informed by program data, member feedback and current practice. • Build and maintain strong working relationships with member service CEOs, managers, staff and Directors. • Take part in working groups, forums, conferences and stakeholder meetings, and share SAWCAN's work as a regional model. • Support funding applications for the region as required.
Program budgets, risk and accountability	• Oversee day-to-day financial management of program budgets so expenditure stays within funding requirements and approved plans. • Approve expenditure within the role's financial delegation, and seek CEO approval beyond it. • Approve timesheets and leave for direct reports in line with the Delegations policy. • Maintain oversight of program risks and escalate significant or unresolved issues to the CEO early. • Carry out other duties consistent with the position as required by the CEO from time to time.

7. Performance expectations

The responsibilities above describe the ongoing role. The expectations below provide a practical way of understanding what good performance looks like. Specific annual projects, targets and deadlines are set through the employee's work plan.

Area	What good performance looks like
Executive leadership and problem-solving	Takes ownership of challenges, identifies issues early and develops practical solutions. Makes sound decisions within delegation and escalates matters requiring CEO involvement with clear advice and recommended options.
Leadership style and emotional intelligence	Leads with empathy, compassion and strong emotional intelligence. Listens, considers individual circumstances and different perspectives, and demonstrates self-awareness. Builds trust and adapts their leadership approach while maintaining professionalism and accountability.
People management and accountability	Provides clear direction, regular supervision, support and constructive feedback. Builds staff capability and confidence while addressing performance or conduct concerns promptly, fairly and professionally.
Communication and keeping the CEO informed	Maintains regular, open and proactive communication with the CEO. Provides timely updates on program progress, key decisions, staffing matters, emerging issues and risks without needing to be prompted. Ensures the CEO is appropriately informed and there are no avoidable surprises.
Program delivery	Programs are delivered on time, within scope and budget. Progress is actively monitored, with delays or challenges identified early and practical plans put in place to address them.
Contract and funder obligations	Contractual obligations are met, reports are submitted on time and funding bodies receive accurate information. Potential risks to deliverables or funding are identified and managed early.
Evidence and reporting	Reporting to the Board, funders and member services is accurate, timely and shows the difference programs are making, not only what was done.
Regional priorities	Regional priorities and roadmaps reflect what member services and communities have said and are used to guide program planning.
Advocacy and policy	Regional data and program evidence are used to influence funding, policy and resource decisions affecting the region.

Area	What good performance looks like
Financial accountability	Program budgets are managed within approved allocations and delegation, with potential overspend or underspend raised early.

Performance is reviewed through regular supervision and SAWCAN's Annual Reflection, Review and Planning processes.

8. The SAWCAN Way

These behaviours were chosen by SAWCAN staff and describe how we expect our people to show up, work with others and contribute to our purpose. They apply to every role, at every level, and are reflected in how we recruit and review performance.

Behaviour	What we expect to see
Community First	Decisions start from what is best for community, not what is easiest for us. Community voice is carried into the work rather than spoken for.
Demonstrates Cultural Respect	Follows local protocols, listens to Elders and takes the time to learn how each community works. Does not assume one community is like another.
Builds Relationships	Puts real effort into relationships with member service staff, communities and partners and maintains them when things get busy or difficult.
Shares Knowledge	Passes on what they learn and explains things clearly to people who are new or working at a distance.
Follows Through	Does what they said they would do and says early when they cannot.
Communicates Openly	Raises problems while they are still small and asks for help early.

9. Person specification

Skills and knowledge

- Deep understanding of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander culture and culturally safe ways of working.
- Significant knowledge of and experience in the Aboriginal community controlled health sector.
- At least 5 years experience in operations or program management, preferably in the not for profit sector.
- Strong contract management skills, including working with funding bodies and meeting reporting obligations.
- Experience with data collection and evaluation frameworks and using data to show impact.
- Ability to develop practical business systems, policies and procedures.
- Strong people management skills, including recruitment, performance management and employee relations.
- Strong interpersonal and emotional intelligence skills, with the ability to lead with empathy, navigate difficult conversations and balance compassion with accountability.

- Financial skills, including budgeting, monitoring and financial reporting, and a working knowledge of risk and compliance frameworks.
- Strong leadership, negotiation, facilitation and networking skills, with the ability to speak to a wide range of audiences.
- Sound judgement and discretion, with the ability to handle sensitive issues and maintain confidentiality.
- Ability to work independently to tight deadlines across a large region while managing competing priorities.

Experience

- Previous experience in a similar leadership role.
- Demonstrated experience working with Aboriginal people, organisations and communities.
- Experience working with government agencies, funding bodies and non-government organisations.
- Experience leading and developing a team, including people working at a distance from each other.
- Experience in Aboriginal health, or a related health or community services field, is desirable.

10. Qualifications, licences and checks

Requirement	Detail
Qualification	Tertiary qualification in business administration, health management or a related field, or equivalent relevant experience.
Australian driver's licence	Current and valid, minimum Class C. Regular driving across the region, including on unsealed roads.
National Police Check	Australian Police check, renewed every 3 years.
SA Working with Children Check	Hold a valid DHS Working with Children Check. Renewed every 5 years.
Safe Environments for Children and Young People training	Must have undertaken or be willing to undertake the *Safe Environments for Children and Young People - 'Through their eyes'* accredited SA Government course.
First aid certificate and CPR	First aid every 3 years, CPR every 12 months.
Annual influenza vaccination	Current immunisations, or willingness to take part in the staff immunisation program. Exemptions and adjustments apply.
NDIS Worker Screening Clearance	Not required.
AHPRA registration	Not required. This is not a clinical position.
Other role specific requirements	Not applicable.

11. Inherent requirements and working conditions

Requirement	What this role involves
High workload and competing priorities	Managing a demanding workload across multiple programs, teams and funding agreements, often with competing deadlines and priorities. Requires strong organisation, time management and the ability to prioritise effectively while maintaining oversight of key responsibilities.
Meetings and competing demands on time	Participating in and leading frequent internal and external meetings, often alongside significant operational responsibilities. Requires the ability to manage time effectively, delegate appropriately and ensure decisions and actions are followed through.
Unplanned issues and changing priorities	Responding to unexpected issues, urgent requests and emerging challenges, sometimes with limited notice or information. Requires flexibility, sound judgement and the ability to make timely decisions, resolve problems and adjust priorities without losing sight of broader organisational objectives.
Difficult conversations and executive accountability	Managing sensitive or challenging conversations with staff, managers, partner organisations and funding bodies. Requires confidence, professionalism, empathy and the ability to address difficult matters directly, make decisions and maintain accountability, even when those decisions may be unpopular.
Executive leadership and working under pressure	Operating effectively in a busy and sometimes high-pressure executive environment, managing competing demands, complex relationships and unexpected challenges with confidence and sound judgement. Expected to take ownership of issues within their area of responsibility, make decisions, identify practical solutions and escalate matters appropriately when required, while maintaining professionalism, empathy and accountability.
Travel and driving	Regular travel across the Eyre Peninsula and Far West Coast, including long drives on sealed and unsealed roads and overnight stays. Intra and interstate travel is required.
Remote and sole work	Working and travelling independently across long distances, sometimes away from immediate support.

Requirement	What this role involves
Hours and after-hours activity	Additional ordinary hours and out of hours work may be required. Travel days may start early or finish late, and there is occasional evening or weekend activity. TOIL and Overtime policy applies.
Physical requirements	Long periods of driving and sitting, walking moderate distances through airports and communities, navigating stairs and steps including when boarding small regional aircraft, walking on uneven or unsealed surfaces where footpaths may not be available, and the setup of workshops, training and community sessions.
Emotionally demanding content	Exposure to community grief and loss, and to program content covering trauma, suicide prevention and child safety. Debriefing, supervision and wellbeing supports are available.
Technology and connectivity	Working with limited internet and phone coverage in some parts of the region and using Microsoft 365, SharePoint and program systems.

Reasonable adjustments: SAWCAN will work with applicants and employees to identify reasonable adjustments needed to participate in recruitment or perform the role.

12. Position review and acknowledgement

This position description sets out the main responsibilities and expectations of the role. It is not an exhaustive list of duties. SAWCAN may update it from time to time in consultation with the employee.

Annual priorities, specific projects, targets and milestones are set through the employee's work plan and performance review.

I acknowledge that I have been given a copy of this position description and understand what the role involves.

	Name	Signature	Date
Employee			
Line Manager			

Version control

Version	Date	Approved by	What changed
1.0	March 2025	CEO	Original position description
2.0	October 2026		Rewritten into the SAWCAN position description template