

Head of Financial Planning and Analysis

Overview

The Head of Financial Planning and Analysis plays a pivotal role in driving strategic financial decision-making within the Electoral Commission. Reporting directly to the Finance Director, this position is responsible for leading the development and execution of robust financial plans and analyses to support the Commission's mission and objectives.

Key objectives:

- Ensure the development of the annual financial plans for the commission. These should be developed in methodology that allows management to effectively reprioritise and should be grounded in a set of compelling cases. The budgets should then be drafted in a compelling case for each of the Parliaments (Westminster, The Senedd and the Scottish Parliament) to seek appropriate contributions of funding;
- Build confidence in budget holders to understand the financials, through well presented, insightful financial reports, issued in a timely manner;
- Identifying areas of concern and working with budget holders to mitigate or resolve financial pressures;
- Driving the premise of value for money in all activities and decision making;
- Continue to develop the team to better provide the planning, assurance, business case support and business partnering services to the commission.

The right candidate will need to be passionate and experienced business partner, excellent at building relations with budget holders and the wider business, with excellent business partnering skills and able to explain finance concepts to non-financial people. An excellent leader with a track record of managing and developing high performing teams and the communication and influencing skills to build understanding and a common focus while working within the organisational values.

Due to the specific nature and purpose of the Electoral Commission, applicants should not be considered where there is an affiliation or participation in a political party.

Responsibilities:

Financial Reporting

- Lead the production of monthly management accounts ensuring major variances are explained and, if appropriate, identify remedial actions;

- Produce and develop the monthly reporting pack to senior stakeholders, to strict deadlines, including taking necessary steps to increase the pace where feasible. Additionally, responsible for drafting Finance reports required for Boards and external stakeholders;
- Accountable for providing financial monitoring services for project spend, including tracking efficiency savings versus business case targets;
- Responsible for completing timely Freedom of Information responses as required;
- Working with the Finance Control and Reporting, responsible for developing reporting, which highlights the cost of activities at a detailed level, including cost per programme, and completing annual bids for future year resources in accordance with regulatory requirements;
- Provide support to the Financial Control and Reporting Team in the preparations of the annual report and accounts, including development of accurate assessments of accruals, prepayments and other provisions.

Financial Planning and Forecasting

- Lead the Commission's annual budget process, ensuring a workable and locally owned set of plans. This includes active engagement in the development of a zero based review of budgets for 2024/25 and ensuring alignment to the Corporate Plan for the same year;
- Lead the engagement with Budget Holders and a coordinated approach to production of periodic re-forecasts, ensuring risks and opportunities are highlighted;
- Provide strategic and long-term financial planning support to the Finance Director. Additionally responsible for drafting the Commission's forecast submissions;
- Ensure the allocation of costs across the funding parliaments is consistent with both levels of work performed and in line with each parliaments understand and agreements. Where changes are needed these should ensure all costs are clearly agreed ahead of the annual funding being agreed.

Business Partner Support

- Build strong and positive relationships with budget holders and senior managers, providing the necessary assistance and professional advice to assist them with the financial aspects of their duties;
- Ensure the Finance Business Partners are supporting each area of the Commission appropriately so that managers across the organisation understand and 'own' their numbers and receive analysis that informs and supports effective decision making;
- Through the Finance Business Partners, responsible for costing and budgeting research and similar projects as appropriate;
- Be the focal point for complex financial queries, providing advice to stakeholders;
- Apply various tools such as investment appraisal techniques to better inform decision-making and adopt a partner/challenger role in evaluating business plans and business cases;
- Support the Commission in gathering evidence to assess the costs, benefits and risks of a wide range of delivery options when making decisions, and provide advice which helps secure value-for-money (VfM);
- Act as the finance lead / participate in projects as a team member as required.

Systems/Processes /Controls

- As the Commission's process lead for the budget, forecast and financial management reporting processes, responsible for identifying and implementing efficiency and value improvements;
- Working with the Financial Control and Reporting Team, and Finance Director to investigate and implement improvements in 'self-service' budgeting / forecasting and reporting;
- Working with the Head of Financial Control and Reporting, ensure the integrity of the financial data supplied by the Finance team to other areas of the Commission and to external stakeholders. Also ensure the accuracy of reporting and compliance with Accounting Standards and the FReM (Financial Reporting Manual) for producing financial management information.

Leadership / Management

- Manage and organise the work of the Financial Planning and Analysis team, including 2 x Finance Business Partners, 1 x Financial Planning Accountant and 1 x Financial Analyst;
- As part of the Finance Leadership team help to set the direction and objectives of the commission and align these objectives within the work of the FP&A team;
- Identify and devote time to train and coach others, both within the Finance function and within the Commission e.g. training for non-finance managers;
- Ensure sound judgement and consider checks as necessary in the authorisation of spends.

General duties and Responsibilities

- Work within and actively support the equality and diversity policies and practices of the Commission;
- Comply with safe systems of work in own work area;
- Participate in the Commission's appraisal process;
- Be responsible for your own continuing professional development;
- Undertake any other duties requested by Finance Director;
- Work to support External auditors as required;
- Work with Internal auditors as required.

Person Specification: Essential

- Professional accounting qualification (ACCA, CIMA, CIPFA, ACA) and evidence of continuous professional development;
- Experience of accounting/budgeting in Central Government environment;
- Strong decision support background;
- Experience of producing a management reporting pack for senior stakeholders;
- Experience of managing budgeting and forecast processes in a complex environment;

- Ability to understand the strategic business goals of an organisation, able to 'look beyond the numbers' and understand the wider business context;
- Strong analytical skills, able to identify and interpret trends and improve financial forecasting.
 - Strong staff management skills. Including the ability to develop individuals to reach their potential and deal with underperformance if required;
- Team player, with exceptional interpersonal skills, able to work with a diverse and broad range of stakeholders across the organisation. Demonstrable ability to influence;
- Good written and oral communication skills, able to communicate clearly, concisely, accurately and in ways that promote understanding, to both finance and non-finance specialists;
- Strong influencing skills, able to challenge stakeholders at all levels when needed;
- Strong finance system skills, including excel and using and developing reporting tools;
- Ability to work flexibly with conflicting demands so that work is scheduled to meet changing priorities and deadlines. Ability to plan and organise own workload effectively and get things done.