GOVERNMENT OF TRISTAN da CUNHA

Financial Officer Role

Tristan da Cunha Overview

Background

Tristan da Cunha is an Overseas Territory of the United Kingdom (UKOT). It is of volcanic origin and consists of four islands – Tristan (the main island), Nightingale and Inaccessible, which together form a group, and Gough Island which lies 220 miles to the south-east. Tristan is the only island with a permanent community: it has a population of around 270 people. It is the remotest inhabited island in the world, situated some 1750 miles south-west of Cape Town and only accessible by sea – 7 to 10 days sailing away from Cape Town on a working fishing trawler. A harbour allows for access to the island for approximately 60 days of the year.

Tristan da Cunha offers expatriates opportunities for walking and occasionally visiting the nearby islands of Nightingale and Inaccessible. Of particular interest is the wildlife and it is possible to observe at very close quarters the beautiful Yellow Nosed Albatross and the Rockhopper Penguin. Fishing is a rewarding pastime both from the shore and at sea. The island people are fun loving, friendly, kind and generous and it is possible to enjoy a lively social life. In the village there is a pub, cafe, outdoor swimming pool, museum/tourist centre. The island shop sells most essential items and there is always an abundant supply of potatoes, fish and locally produced beef and lamb. There are five television channels provided by British Forces Broadcasting Service that provide a wide variety of films, dramas, documentaries, sports and soaps as well as UK news. Although the island is very remote the telephone service is good and the internet is available, albeit quite slow.

Tristan da Cunha is internally self governing and is part of the UK Overseas Territory of St Helena, Ascension and Tristan da Cunha. Constitutionally, executive authority rests with the Tristan Governor (resident on St Helena); in practice authority is delegated to an Administrator who is resident on Tristan and is the de facto Head of Government. The Administrator heads a locally elected Island Council, which is an advisory body on policy matters. The Administrator and Council are supported by government departments. These include: Agriculture, Conservation, Education, Finance, Fishing, Medical, Post Office & Tourism, Public Works and Telecommunications.

The Island has St. Mary’s School which caters for children from the age of 3 years to 16 years. Island staff includes a head of department, a deputy head, four other teachers, a trainee teacher, a playgroup leader and a librarian. None of the teachers are qualified but some have benefitted from training in the UK. There are currently 30 pupils attending the school. The 13 to 16 age range work towards IGCSE in only English and Maths.

Tristan’s main resource is lobster fishing: product is exported to the US, Australia and Japanese markets, and a royalty agreement with the company that has exclusive fishing rights, generates income for Government. Tristan also earns income from the sale of stamps, coins and handicraft souvenirs. Revenue also flows from tourism and visitor
accommodation. The UK Government provides some support in specific areas including funding expatriate positions in education, health and finance as well as funding for training and infrastructure.

Tristan’s financial situation is problematic: more needs to be done to ensure Tristan can maintain its financial independence and avoid insolvency. The island has a Strategic Sustainable Development Plan (SSDP) which maps out a way forward, but the Government does not currently have the capacity to deliver it. The Treasury/Finance Department manages every budget, and oversee spending across the whole of Government, as well as local community. The staff includes a Treasurer/head of department, a deputy head, and four other clerks. While staff members have undergone training, as yet none are qualified accountants. Ten years ago the Island was in significant financial difficulty, and faced insolvency. Hard decisions have needed to be taken to address the situation, and there have been significant improvements over the last few years. Largely due to the Finance Officer mentoring the department. It will be crucial to take on the mentoring role to the island team to ensure the team have the confidence and understanding of correct financial processes.

It is the long term aim to ensure that Tristanians can become fully qualified accountants and can manage the Finance Department without expatriate assistance. Although the Finance Department are very open and keen for change, it will be necessary to have a positive attitude to change and encourage all government departments to improve financial management. Strong interpersonal skills are vital.

**Key Competencies Required for the Financial Officer Roles**

In order to deliver results the successful candidate will need to be very sensitive to the advantages and problems of living in a small and isolated community.

It is vital to be receptive to the views of the stakeholders and work with them to develop plans for improvement. You will need to show extremely high levels of enthusiasm, energy and commitment and have the qualities of resilience, patience, adaptability and resourcefulness in order to cope with the island’s remoteness, and the length of time that it sometimes takes to get resources in place.

The successful candidate will have to be fair and impartial with all employees, build productive working relationships, promote teamwork and encourage staff to take on responsibilities. Conflicts of interest will not be tolerated, and the successful candidate’s actions must be beyond reproach. It is very important to respect confidences, and a good sense of humour is a distinct advantage.

Visit [www.tristandc.com](http://www.tristandc.com) for further information on the Island.