

POSITION DESCRIPTION

Effective from: September 2026

Position Title	Programme Director (Waitaha Canterbury Regional Spatial Plan)
Reporting To	Primary reporting line: Waitaha Canterbury Regional Spatial Plan Executive Steering Group (Chief Executives' Forum) (and host council chief executive/manager for employment purposes) Functional reporting relationship: Waitaha Canterbury Regional Spatial Plan Committee (once established)
Operational Host Support	Provided by the Christchurch City Council
Location	Christchurch City, Canterbury - regular travel across the region is required
Supervising	Programme Management Office, secretariat Functional leadership and coordination to support workstream leads, advisors, and contracted specialists as required.
Tenure	Full time, fixed-term

Context
The Draft Planning Bill (Government Bill 235-1) proposes mandatory preparation of a Spatial Plan for each region, with statutory timelines that may require Waitaha Canterbury to have a regional spatial plan prepared and notified as early as mid-2028 (subject to enactment timing and national direction). As a result of the proposed obligations and timeframes Waitaha Canterbury has agreed preparatory work should commence now to support regional readiness, noting that final details may change following enactment of the Planning Bill. Initial programme scoping for foundational work has commenced. This work has identified the need for a Programme Director to provide independent programme-level leadership for the establishment and delivery of the Waitaha Canterbury Regional Spatial Plan. The new planning legislation (Planning Bill, Natural Environment Bill (Government Bill 234-1) set up the new planning framework. Government material indicates the transition period to end in early 2031. Current local government reform proposals signal a move towards new or reorganised local government entities post 2028 local government elections. The Waitaha Canterbury Regional Spatial Plan, and combined plan work, should be prepared as enduring regional planning products capable of being administered by future entities.

Purpose

The Programme Director role provides leadership for a complex, multi-organisation legislated initiative that requires coordinated governance, disciplined project/programme management, and strong cross-council integration.

The role is responsible for facilitating and leading an emerging legislative mandate and collective regional intent into a regionally relevant delivery programme, and an effective formal statutory Waitaha Canterbury Regional Spatial Plan.

The role will work with all participating councils and mana whenua partners, including with the technical leaders and subject matter experts (SMEs) and governance bodies to build a shared spatial planning approach that is strategic, practical, and which meets all statutory requirements.

The role will provide programme-level leadership to an evolving delivery structure over time, including project administration, specialist inputs, and workstream support, and focus on integration, coordination, and momentum.

Essential to success is the ability to influence without direct authority, navigate ambiguity, build trust across stakeholders, and maintain a clear line of sight from strategy through to delivery.

The role requires regular regional travel and in-person engagement, including attendance at in-person workshops, meetings, workstream sessions and engagement activities with participating councils, mana whenua partners and stakeholders.

Key Result Areas

Results Area	Activities	Expected Outcome
Project Establishment	Establish the Waitaha Canterbury Regional Spatial Plan project based upon disciplined project/programme management methodology. Develop the project initiation phase and roadmap in conjunction with the participating Councils, building off the work undertaken to date, including budgeting and financial requirements. Support the establishment of interim governance arrangements and ensure governance documentation is practical, clear, and aligned to statutory requirements. Translate governance decisions into operational actions through collaboration with participating councils to support successful delivery of the Regional Spatial Plan.	- The project is well planned with visible structure, sequencing, and accountabilities. - Governance is managed to evolve into formal statutory arrangements when required. - All project mechanisms are well understood across the region and consistently applied. - The project initiates immediate work on those aspects that are considered “no-regrets” items, while

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		remaining adaptable to legislative change.
Project Leadership and Delivery	Lead the end-to-end delivery of the Waitaha Canterbury Regional Spatial Plan on behalf of the region's participating councils and associated governance bodies. With the support of technical leads and SMEs develop, maintain and continuously refine an integrated and staged spatial planning process. Coordinate and integrate the work of workstream leads, subregional inputs, so that outputs are aligned, timely, and capable of being brought together into one coherent regional programme. Identify project drift, duplication, unresolved issues or emerging barriers, and intervene or escalate early to keep the project on track.	• The project uses best practice project management techniques to keep the project on time, within scope and on budget. • The project has clarity, cohesion, and decision-making. • Delivery is coordinated across councils within well understood workstreams and phases. • Project milestones, outputs, and timeframes are realistic, visible, and actively managed. • Project risks are identified early and addressed promptly.
Cross-Council Collaboration and Partnership Leadership	Build and maintain constructive working relationships across participating councils, mana whenua partners, technical leaders and SMEs and external stakeholders. Facilitate collaboration in a way that balances regional outcomes with local perspectives, while always promoting collective ownership of the project. Support the development of effective working arrangements between the interim governance group, the project leads, and the technical delivery layers, including the emerging interface with any future spatial planning committee. Work with each council to resolve any resourcing and other issues.	• Relationships across the project are constructive, credible and delivery focused. • Councils and mana whenua partners work collectively, whilst maintaining clarity of the agreed individual roles/accountabilities. • There exists high trust, highly intentional collaboration, and widely shared clarity of the expected group and individual contributions. • Tensions and conflicts are well managed professionally, and do not derail progress.

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Mana Whenua and Strategic Stakeholder Integration	Facilitate the development of an appropriate partnership approach for mana whenua involvement. Ensure mana whenua considerations and expectations are meaningfully integrated into project design, scope, working arrangements, and issue resolution pathways. Coordinate meaningful engagement with key regional stakeholders, infrastructure providers, and agencies whose inputs are required to shape a credible and implementable spatial plan. Ensure stakeholder engagement supports project progress towards delivery rather than becoming siloed or duplicative.	• Mana whenua participation is considered early and approached respectfully. • Strategic stakeholder interfaces are coordinated to support effective implementation of the joint spatial planning approach. • The Project's approach to engagement respects and fosters enduring relationships, beyond compliance-driven transactional arrangements. • Risks associated with partner and/or stakeholder alignment are reduced through early and well-structured engagement.

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Spatial Planning Workstream Integration	Work with technical leads and SMEs to convert high-level task lists into coordinated workstreams, outputs, and deliverables that align with scope, timeframe and budget requirements. Support the alignment and sequencing of regional, subregional and local components of the project, including the development, maintenance and refinement of an integrated and staged spatial planning process. Build off existing work by drawing appropriately on proven models, templates and lessons from comparable strategic spatial planning arrangements.	• Workstreams are clearly defined, appropriately scoped, and connected into one coherent project. • Technical work contributes to a single integrated delivery pathway, avoiding wasted effort creating a collection of disconnected tasks. • Existing good practice, templates, and lessons are openly used to accelerate progress and reduce execution risk. • The project can effectively move from process establishment into substantive plan development with confidence.
Project Reporting, Risk and Assurance	Establish and maintain robust governance, assurance and reporting frameworks that enable clear oversight of programme progress, risks and issues Provide regular, high-quality reporting to the Waitaha Canterbury Regional Spatial Plan Committee, Chief Executives, governance forums, and relevant officer groups on project status, risks, decisions required, resource pressures, and next steps. Maintain an integrated project risk register and proactively escalate issues that may impact timing, confidence, quality, relationships, or statutory readiness. Support the development of a Waitaha Canterbury Regional Spatial Plan performance and assurance framework as the project matures.	• Reporting is timely, concise, decision-oriented and trusted by governance and delivery stakeholders. • Risks, issues, and dependencies are visible and actively managed. • Governance and Chief Executives can make informed decisions at the right time. • Assurance disciplines support project quality without creating unnecessary bureaucracy.

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Project Support Administration and Project Support Coordination	Support the establishment and effective operation of a project management office, to include governance service, records management, scheduling administration, project tracking, and general coordination support. Provide functional direction to project support administration support as aligned to delivery needs. Work with participating councils to support practical resource planning, cost-sharing arrangements, and transparent use of shared project funding. Ensure the project is supported by clear administrative, financial, and information management processes.	• Project support administration support is right-sized and enables the project to operate efficiently. • Shared funding and resource arrangements are transparent, practical, and well managed. • The project support administration focuses on supporting project delivery and assures that the associated support and coordination is enabling, and not a constraint.
Communications and Engagement	Oversee the development of practical project communications and engagement approaches that support a multi-council regional process. Support clear internal communication pathways across councils so that decisions, actions, and expectations are understood at the right levels. Work with relevant communications advisors to ensure public-facing or stakeholder-facing communications are aligned with the project stage, legislative context, and governance direction.	• Communications support project clarity, confidence, and consistency. • Internal stakeholders are kept informed in a way that supports timely decision-making and coordinated action. • External communications are appropriately staged, aligned, and credible.
Other Duties	Be responsible for meeting the provisions of the Public Records Act 2005, the Privacy Act 2020, LGOIMA, and any related organisational policies and processes relevant to the project. Act as a role model in all interactions across the project and maintain the reputation of participating organisations in all that you do.	• You respond positively to requests for assistance in your own and related areas, demonstrating adaptability and professionalism. • You produce work that complies with relevant legislative and organisational requirements and reflects good practice.

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		You maintain confidence in the project through sound judgement, integrity, and professionalism.
Professional and Career Development	Keep up to date with emerging strategic planning, project delivery, resource management reform, governance, and partnership practice relevant to the role.	- Performance expectations are discussed constructively, and progress is actively reflected upon. - The role holder remains current and credible in relation to relevant practice and reform.
Health & Safety	Always have the wellbeing of self and others as a priority. Champion, support, implement and adhere to health and safety policies and procedures. Promote a safe and environmentally sound working environment, including when travelling, convening workshops, working across multiple sites, or managing external providers. Report all risks identified and contribute to their elimination or minimisation.	- Health and safety policies and practices are always complied with. - Risks are identified, reported, and managed appropriately. - Work is undertaken safely, including in collaborative and field-based settings. - There are no preventable work-related injuries or incidents arising from your work.

Relationships
- Waitaha Canterbury Regional Spatial Plan Committee and any future formal governance body - Chief Executives Forum - Planning Managers Group - Technical Leadership Group

Relationships

- Regional, subregional and topic-specific workstream leads
- Mana whenua partners, as determined by te rūnanga paptipu o Waitaha
- Ministry, Cities, Environment, Regions & Transport
- Other relevant government agencies, infrastructure providers and cross-boundary partners

Person Specification

The expertise and competencies required for a person to reach full competency in the role.

	Essential	Desirable
Education and Qualifications (or equivalent level of learning)	• Degree-level qualification in project management, planning, public policy, public administration, geography, environmental management, or a related field. • Formal programme or project management training, or equivalent demonstrated experience leading complex multi-agency projects.	• Relevant postgraduate qualification. • Membership of an appropriate professional organisation. • Project Management certification (Prince2, PMP)
Experience	• Significant experience (>10 years) in leading high-stakes, complex cross-organisational programmes. • Significant experience (>10 years) in a senior programme, project, policy or strategic planning role in local government, central government, policy, infrastructure, planning, or a similarly complex public sector environment. • Experience leading complex cross-organisational initiatives involving multiple stakeholders, competing priorities, and governance layers. • Experience establishing or operating governance forums, project controls, reporting arrangements, and delivery frameworks. • Experience writing high-quality reports, briefings and decision papers for senior	• Experience working with iwi, hapū and post-Treaty settlement governance entities. • Experience in a role requiring significant regional travel and multi-site engagement.

	leaders, chief executives, elected members, and/or governance bodies. • Experience facilitating collaboration, managing conflict constructively, and influencing without direct authority. • Experience in managing specialist advice, technical inputs, and/or contracted services.	
Knowledge and Skills	• Highly developed facilitation, communication, negotiation, and relationship management skills. • Excellent programme management capability. • Strong understanding of governance, public sector decision-making, and the interface between governance and operations. • Ability to translate emerging policy or legislative requirements into practical delivery structures and work projects. • Ability to synthesise complex information, identify key issues quickly, and provide clear advice. • Strong risk, issue, dependency, and assurance management capability. • Strong organisational skills, including the ability to manage pace, ambiguity and multiple workstreams simultaneously.	• Knowledge of spatial planning processes, and integrated land use/infrastructure planning. • Understanding of local government funding, long-term planning, and infrastructure investment settings. • Experience operating successfully in politically sensitive, reform-driven, or institutionally uncertain environments

	• Sound understanding of public sector accountability, records management, privacy, and official information requirements. • Cultural awareness and the ability to operate respectfully and effectively in partnership settings.	
Personal Qualities	• Proven ability to build credibility and trust with a wide range of stakeholders. • Calm, resilient and able to maintain momentum in ambiguous, high-pressure, or politically sensitive environments. • Proven ability to work with a range of technical experts on complex policy problems. • Ability to absorb and translate complex technical information into clear and concise summaries for elected members and the public while deferring to subject matter experts for explanations where appropriate. • Strategic in outlook, but practical and delivery-focused in execution. • Self-managed, disciplined, and able to take initiative. • Diplomatic, professional, and able to manage strong personalities without losing direction. • Collaborative and committed to high-quality outcomes for the Otago region. • Strong customer and public value orientation, including the ability to seek value for money. • Integrity and sound judgement.	

From time to time, it may be necessary to consider changes to the position description in response to the changing nature of the work environment, legislative settings, and project needs.