



General Manager, Leadership and Capability

Position Description – People and Culture

Team:	Leadership & Capability	Location:	Auckland (preferred)
Reports to:	Chief People and Culture Officer (CPCO)		
Role Type:	Permanent		

About Us

KiwiRail’s Role in Aotearoa, New Zealand

KiwiRail, a proud State-Owned Enterprise, delivers sustainable and inclusive growth for our customers, communities, and people.

For more than 150 years, rail in New Zealand has connected communities, delivered freight and passengers around the country, and showcased our spectacular scenery to the world. Our purpose—Hononga Whaikaha, Oranga mo Aotearoa (Stronger Connections, Better New Zealand)—speaks to connection with our customers and the future needs of their businesses, connection with the communities we serve and operate in, and connection with each other. KiwiRail is carrying this legacy into the future, delivering connected rail and shipping transport services that create economic, social, and environmental value for New Zealand and New Zealanders.

Our Workplace

At KiwiRail, our values define the behaviour we expect from everyone. We have a team of over 4500 people, and every connection we make with each other, our union partners, our customers and all our stakeholders must be of the highest standard.



Safety, health, and well-being are our number one priority, ensuring our people return home safe and healthy every day.

About the Role

Purpose of the role

KiwiRail is in a phase of significant transformation to modernise and grow customer loyalty and as a key enabler to the end-to-end supply chain in Aotearoa. We have recently reviewed both Leadership development and Learning & Development priorities and KiwiRail is committed to invest in this next phase. A core part of that is taking a consistent, enterprise-wide approach that builds leadership capability, strengthens organisational culture, and enables the successful delivery of strategic priorities.

This new role of General Manager Leadership & Capability (GM L&C) provides enterprise leadership for KiwiRail's leadership, learning, and capability agenda. The role is responsible for shaping and implementing the organisation's leadership and capability strategy, ensuring a clear and aligned operating model, and delivering integrated solutions that support business performance, safety, customer outcomes, and future workforce needs.

The GM L&C is accountable for leading KiwiRail's enterprise capability mandate across learning, leadership development, and culture strategy, while providing trusted strategic advice to the Chief People & Culture Officer (CPCO) and Executive Leadership Team (ELT).

The role requires deep expertise in leadership development and organisational capability, with the ability to modernise ways of working and design culture initiatives that support organisational performance and transformation. Equally important is the credibility and operational rigour required to lead technical and safety-critical learning delivery in a complex, regulated environment.

This role will operate strategically and operationally, building strong partnerships across the business and ensuring KiwiRail has the leadership, capability, and culture foundations required to deliver its long-term ambitions. Given its strategic significance, the role is considered a successor pathway to the CPCO position.

Key Accountabilities

Strategic leadership and direction

- Lead and develop the L&C function across its full scope, from technical and safety-critical learning through to leadership development and culture.
- Translate organisational strategy into a coherent people capability and learning agenda with clear priorities, sequencing, and investment rationale.
- Operate as a trusted adviser to the CPCO on leadership capability, culture, and organisational effectiveness.
- Build the credibility and presence of the L&C function as a strategic enabler of business performance, not just a service provider.
- Lead an explicit mandate to modernise the function's ways of working, systems, and service delivery model, in direct response to the L&D Operating Model Review and lead the redesign of the L&C operating model to establish a clear, ELT-endorsed enterprise mandate.

Learning strategy and delivery

- Lead the Learning Design & Systems, Learning Delivery, and Learning Solutions sub-functions, ensuring technical, compliance, and safety-critical learning meets legislative requirements and industry standards in a safety-critical environment.
- Champion continuous improvement across learning systems, delivery models, and assessment practices.
- Ensure the function has the right capability, tools, and processes to design, deliver, and evaluate effective learning at scale.
- Maintain a strong understanding of the organisation's operational and regulatory context, building functional credibility with technical stakeholders.

Leadership development

- Lead an enterprise-wide leadership development strategy and programme delivery across all leader levels, grounded in the KiwiRail Leadership Framework.

- Build a coherent system for identifying, assessing, developing, and supporting leaders, grounded in the KiwiRail Leadership Framework.
- Establish and manage flagship leadership programmes, cohort-based learning, and targeted development interventions.
- Connect leadership development to succession and talent strategies, working closely with the broader People and Culture function.

Culture and engagement

- Define and activate a cultural strategy with leadership as the biggest lever, bringing together employee engagement, values activation, and cultural health measurement.
- Design and lead initiatives that build cultural alignment and strengthen employee engagement across a geographically and operationally diverse workforce.
- Use data, listening strategies, and cultural health measurement to surface cultural insights and track progress over time.
- Build leadership capability and accountability for culture as a day-to-day leadership practice, not a periodic initiative.

Stakeholder relationships and external partnerships

- Build and sustain strong working relationships across the business, from operational and safety leaders through to the executive team, to ensure the L&C function is trusted, well regarded, and genuinely connected to business needs.
- Lead engagement with external partners including industry training organisations (ITOs) and funding bodies to optimise delivery outcomes and funding streams.
- Build effective networks across the industry to stay current on learning practice, workforce development trends, and regulatory requirements.
- Hold stakeholder management as a critical, standalone capability of the role — not an implicit or secondary expectation.

People leadership and functional management

- Lead a high-performing L&C leadership team, providing clear direction, development, and accountability.
- Foster a culture of continuous improvement, curiosity, and delivery excellence across the function.
- Manage the function's ~\$10.3M budget, resources, and vendor relationships with commercial discipline.
- Improve revenue and optimise funding streams through external partnerships, and present business cases as required to grow the function's value offering.
- Build an L&C function that is well regarded internally and operates with a strong service ethic and contemporary ways of working.

Scope and context

This team sits within the broader People and Culture function and encompasses the following areas:

Area	Focus
Learning Design & Systems	Design and architecture of technical, compliance, and safety-critical learning content, systems, and delivery models.
Learning Delivery	Delivery of mandatory, compliance, and role-specific technical and regulatory learning across the organisation.
Learning Solutions	Learning solutions design and continuous improvement of learning infrastructure, administration, and reporting.
Leadership development	Enterprise-wide leadership development strategy and programme delivery across all leader levels, grounded in the KiwiRail Leadership Framework.
Culture and engagement	Cultural strategy and activation, employee engagement, values activation, and cultural health measurement.
External partnerships	Relationships with ITOs and funding bodies to support delivery and optimise funding streams.

Key challenges

- Leading the redesign of the L&C operating model to establish a clear, ELT-endorsed enterprise mandate — addressing the ambiguity that a recent Operating Model Review identified as the root cause of systemic issues, building awareness and confidence across senior stakeholders on responsibilities, resetting the mandate of the function with prioritisation processes that are integrated and collective.
- Rebuilding trust with business units that have increasingly self-delivered learning and development activity and bypassed the central function, reducing the safety, consistency, and cost risks created by that decentralisation.
- Establishing enterprise-wide leadership development and culture capability where previously this area has been primarily focussed on safety leadership, and a few select programmes. The demand is high, so the challenge is to move at pace in order to support leaders to strive to grow and improve the business.
- Balancing the rigour required to continue to deliver the technical and safety-critical learning whilst modernising ways of working and building stakeholder confidence.

Success in the first 12 months

A successful GM L&C will have:

- Established credibility with the executive team and key business stakeholders and built a clear picture of the organisation's capability and culture needs.
- Secured a clear, ELT-endorsed mandate for the L&C function and progressed the redesign of its operating model.
- Launched or progressed at least one flagship leadership development initiative that is gaining traction with leaders at multiple levels.
- Defined and begun embedding a cultural strategy with measurable indicators and clear executive sponsorship.
- Built a high-performing L&C leadership team that is clear on direction, accountable for delivery, and well regarded across the organisation.
- Demonstrated commercial discipline in managing the function's budget and vendor relationships.

- Established strong working relationships with key internal stakeholders and external partners, and begun building a reputation as a credible, trusted function across the business.
- Identified and begun implementing a programme of modernisation within the function — updating at least one significant aspect of how L&C operates or delivers.

This position description reflects the primary accountabilities of the role. Specific responsibilities and priorities may evolve in line with business needs.

Key Relationships Here are the key relationships relevant to this role		Manage /Lead	Deliver to	Collaborate with	Advise or inform
Internal	CPCO		✓	✓	✓
	Executive Leadership Team		✓	✓	✓
	L&C leadership team (Learning Design & Systems, Learning Delivery, and Learning Solutions leads)	✓			
	People and Culture leadership team			✓	
	Business leaders and GMs		✓	✓	
	Safety and regulatory leaders			✓	
External	External providers (facilitators, vendors, technology partners)	✓			
	ITOs, funding bodies and regulators	✓		✓	

What you will do to contribute

Health Safety and Wellbeing	• Implement safety procedures and ensure team compliance • Analyse workplace risks and develop mitigation strategies • Promote a culture of safety and wellbeing within your team • Respond effectively to safety incidents and near-misses • Support team members' physical and mental health
Customer Focus	• Provide a positive customer experience • Support a customer-focused culture at KiwiRail • Know our services well and explain them to customers • Respond quickly to customer needs • Develop solutions to meet customer requirements • Solve complex customer issues • Work with colleagues to improve customer outcomes
High Performing Teams Skills	• Set clear performance standards aligned with KiwiRail's goal • Build a supportive and cooperative team environment • Provide timely and constructive feedback • Actively seek diverse perspectives in problem-solving • Identify opportunities for coaching and mentoring
Commercial Acumen	• Plan and monitor resource allocation to achieve team objectives • Consider financial implications when making recommendations • Understand and comply with procurement guidelines • Work with suppliers to ensure quality outcomes • Recognise how financial decisions impact KiwiRail's overall position
Role specific domain	• Follow governance frameworks and systems • Identify and address governance issues early •
Role specific domain	• Choose and adapt appropriate risk management frameworks • Identify and forecast risks, issues, and opportunities in projects •
Role specific domain	• Apply asset management policies • Implement asset management frameworks •

Decision Making

The GM L&C is accountable for strategic and operational decisions across the L&C function — balancing continuity of technical and safety-critical learning delivery with the redesign of the operating model and the build-out of leadership development and culture capability.

Key decision-making requirements of the position include:

- Strategic priorities, sequencing, and investment across the L&C function
- Design, sequencing, and endorsement of leadership development and culture initiatives
- Operating model and service delivery redesign decisions
- Budget, resourcing, and vendor decisions within delegated authority
- People leadership decisions for the L&C leadership team and wider function

Human Resources Delegations	Senior Leader
Direct reports	5 direct reports
Finance Delegations	TBC
Budget (operating and capital)	~\$3M (Learning & Capability operating budget)
Travel Delegations	Yes approves national travel
Statutory powers	Nil identified

Physical demands and the nature of work

This role is administration-based and requires:

- prolonged sitting and high computer usage
- regular travel across KiwiRail's network to build relationships with operational, safety, and business leaders
- carrying of laptop and paperwork when alternating between home and office

Your role may include other tasks suited to your level, as your manager directs. This job description shows your current duties. We'll review and update it with you if your responsibilities change.

About you

Knowledge and experience

- Senior leadership experience in a Learning and Development, Leadership Development, or People Capability function, ideally in a large or complex organisation.
- Demonstrated experience leading technical and compliance learning, with an understanding of the demands of regulated or safety-critical environments.
- Experience designing and delivering leadership development programmes at an enterprise level.

- Track record of building culture and engagement in a large workforce, including in environments that are operationally dispersed or workforce diverse.
- Proven ability to lead and develop high-performing teams, including managing specialists and senior practitioners.
- Experience operating at executive or senior leadership team level, influencing strategy and building stakeholder confidence.
- Experience managing external partnerships with ITOs, funding bodies, regulatory agencies, or industry providers in a regulated or technical environment.
- Demonstrated ability to build credibility and influence across a diverse, complex stakeholder environment — from frontline operations through to executive leadership.

Ways of working / Work-related qualities

- Systems thinker with the ability to see the connections across learning, capability, culture, and business performance.
- Strong diagnostic capability: able to identify the real problem before reaching for the solution.
- Excellent communicator who can translate complex ideas simply, influence across a wide stakeholder group, and present credibly to senior audiences.
- Commercially oriented, with the ability to articulate the business case for investment in people capability.
- Comfortable operating in ambiguity and building in environments where not everything is defined.
- Highly organised, delivery-focused, and able to balance a strategic agenda with operational accountability.
- Skilled relationship builder who can earn trust at multiple levels and across different working cultures, including operational, technical, and corporate environments.
- Able to lead the redesign of an operating model: modernise approaches, shift ways of working, and take people on a journey without losing momentum or credibility.
- Curious and committed to continuous improvement, in the function and in themselves.
- Builds trust quickly, works with integrity, and is direct without being blunt.
- Energised by working in a complex organisation with a range of stakeholders and competing priorities.
- Has genuine conviction about the role of leadership and culture in enabling a safe, high-performing organisation.

Qualifications

- A relevant tertiary qualification in Human Resources, Organisational Psychology, Business, Education, or a related field, or equivalent significant senior leadership experience.
- Demonstrated senior leadership experience in a Learning and Development or Leadership Development function, ideally in a large, complex, or safety-critical organisation.
- A postgraduate qualification in a related field is desirable but not essential.

**CREATING
STRONGER
CONNECTIONS**