
POSITION DESCRIPTION

DETAILS

Role title: Chief Executive, Western Institute of Technology at Taranaki (WITT)

Reports to: Chair, Western Institute of Technology at Taranaki Council

Location: New Plymouth, Taranaki

Delegations: Executive delegations granted by the ITP Council, including operational, financial, academic, and strategic responsibility under the direction of the Council as governed by the Education and Training Act 2020, the Crown Entities Act 2004, and the Employment Relations Act 2000.

ABOUT INSTITUTES OF TECHNOLOGY AND POLYTECHNICS

Institutes of Technology and Polytechnics (ITPs) are public tertiary education organisations delivering vocational education and training services to learners across New Zealand. ITPs operate under the Education and Training Act 2020, following the disestablishment of the New Zealand Institute of Skills and Technology (NZIST), as part of structural reform to reinstate regional leadership, strengthen governance, and return decision-making authority closer to communities and industries.

Each ITP is responsible for delivering a full range of vocational education programmes, including certificate, diploma, and degree-level qualifications, as well as work-based learning, professional training, and industry-specific micro-credentials.

ITPs are large organisations with diverse student cohorts and multi-layered staffing structures, encompassing academic, administrative, support, and executive leadership teams. These institutions manage significant physical assets including buildings, specialist training facilities, and technology infrastructure.

An ITP's statutory responsibilities include:

- Delivering high-quality academic programmes and maintaining NZQA quality assurance.
- Ensuring access and learner success for all student groups, including Māori, Pasifika, disabled learners, and learners with lower prior achievement.
- Managing public funding and commercial revenue streams in a financially sustainable and accountable manner.
- Maintaining robust governance, public reporting, and compliance frameworks in line with Crown entity standards.
- Ensuring employment practices and organisational culture align with obligations under the Employment Relations Act 2000

ROLE PURPOSE

The Chief Executive is accountable for the leadership and management of the ITP, ensuring all operational, financial, academic, and public accountability functions are delivered effectively and sustainably.

The Chief Executive holds overarching responsibility for establishing the new independent ITP to ensure that it meets all statutory requirements and community expectations. This includes ensuring the continued smooth transfer of staff, students, assets, systems, and governance processes while safeguarding education delivery and student wellbeing.

The role requires large-scale organisational leadership: setting strategic direction, overseeing academic governance, managing financial resources, leading multi-layered leadership teams, and building robust stakeholder relationships across industry, government, iwi and Māori partners, and the community. Working collaboratively across the ITP sector is essential.

The Chief Executive must ensure that the ITP operates as a financially sustainable, academically credible, and socially responsive public institution. This includes managing risk, maintaining compliance with all legislative frameworks, and leading organisational culture and people development across a broad and diverse workforce.

The Chief Executive is fully accountable to the ITP Council for all aspects of organisational leadership, performance, and compliance, including delivery against strategic objectives, achievement of key performance indicators, financial sustainability, and academic quality.

This accountability covers statutory obligations, employment relations, asset and infrastructure management, risk management, and equity outcomes. The Chief Executive is responsible to the Council for maintaining robust organisational culture, ensuring good employer practices, and providing free, frank, and timely advice that enables effective governance decision-making.

ABOUT WITT

The Western Institute of Technology at Taranaki (WITT) is Taranaki's only government-owned tertiary education institution, providing vocational education and training from its main campus in central New Plymouth and a secondary campus in Hāwera.

WITT was established as a community polytechnic and has built a strong reputation for industry-connected, employment-focused education. Each year, more than 3,000 students enrol across over 60 qualifications, ranging from foundation-level certificates through to bachelor's degrees and graduate diplomas (Levels 1–7+). Programme areas include highways and engineering technologies, business and administration, health and wellbeing, hospitality, hair and beauty, art and design, construction, electrical, automotive engineering, mechanical engineering, plumbing, gas fitting and drainlaying, primary industries and environmental management, foundation learning and pathways, and Māori language.

The New Plymouth campus is centrally located and includes specialist facilities such as engineering workshops, hospitality training facilities (including a training restaurant and café), art studios, computer laboratories, and two student accommodation blocks.

Taranaki is a region with a distinctive economic profile shaped by the energy sector (oil, gas, and the emerging renewable energy transition), dairy farming, food manufacturing, engineering, and tourism. Mount Taranaki is a defining geographic and cultural landmark. The region is experiencing economic transition as New Zealand moves away from fossil fuel reliance, creating both challenges and opportunities for workforce development and industry retraining.

WITT remained within NZIST at 1 January 2026 while working towards viability, with the intention to establish as a standalone polytechnic later in 2026. The institution's financial sustainability challenges are linked to a relatively small regional population base and the broader economic transitions affecting the Taranaki region.

Taranaki is the rohe of eight iwi: Te Ātiawa, Taranaki iwi, Ngāti Mutunga, Ngāti Maru, Ngā Mahanga, Ngāruahine, Ngāti Ruanui, and Ngā Rauru Kīhahi.

ABOUT THE ROLE

The Chief Executive will lead WITT through its re-establishment as an independent regional polytechnic, positioning the institution to serve Taranaki's evolving workforce needs during a period of significant regional economic transition. This is a strategically critical role requiring an executive who can connect vocational education to the region's economic transformation while maintaining WITT's core function as an accessible community education provider.

The immediate priorities include establishing WITT's financial viability as a standalone institution, confirming governance arrangements, and ensuring the programme portfolio is aligned with both current industry demand and emerging regional workforce needs. The energy transition represents both a challenge (declining demand for fossil fuel-related skills) and an opportunity (growing demand for renewable energy, infrastructure, and environmental skills). The Chief Executive must position WITT to respond strategically to this transition.

WITT's subsidiary, the New Zealand Institute of Highway Technology (NZIHT), provides a nationally significant capability in roading and infrastructure training. The Chief Executive must ensure this subsidiary is well-managed and strategically aligned with both WITT's broader objectives and national infrastructure investment priorities.

The Taranaki community places a high value on regional identity and local responsiveness. The Chief Executive must be genuinely embedded in the region, building relationships with local industry leaders, iwi partners, community organisations, and regional development agencies. WITT's role extends beyond education delivery – it is a cornerstone of regional social and economic infrastructure, and the Chief Executive must lead accordingly.

The Chief Executive carries responsibility for establishing and leading the ITP as an independent statutory organisation. The Chief Executive must ensure robust academic governance processes are in place, maintaining programme quality and compliance with NZQA requirements across all delivery

sites. This includes managing curriculum development, teaching and learning innovation, assessment, and moderation systems.

Alongside academic responsibilities, the Chief Executive is accountable for financial leadership at a level consistent with large public institutions. This involves overseeing public funding from TEC, managing commercial revenue streams, and maintaining capital asset portfolios, including facilities and infrastructure.

The Chief Executive must lead organisational design, workforce planning, employment relations, and staff wellbeing frameworks, ensuring alignment with the Employment Relations Act 2000 and Crown entity expectations for good employer conduct.

Public accountability is a core focus. The Chief Executive is responsible for transparent reporting to the ITP Council, TEC, Ministers, and other oversight agencies. This includes regular performance reporting on financial health, student outcomes, equity measures, and stakeholder satisfaction.

Community and stakeholder engagement forms a critical part of the role. The role involves direct engagement with industry representatives, regional industries, employers, and community organisations to ensure education delivery meets current and emerging workforce needs.

The Chief Executive is fully accountable to the Council for the overall performance of the organisation, delivering against strategic priorities, operational requirements, and key performance indicators as formally set and reviewed by the Council. This includes ensuring that organisational objectives are met within approved financial parameters and that all statutory obligations are consistently upheld.

PERSON SPECIFICATION

Professional Qualifications and Experience:

Candidates ideally would also show experience in leading structural or organisational transitions, including managing asset transfers, workforce integration, and system establishment.

Understanding and experience with New Zealand's public accountability frameworks, including the Education and Training Act 2020, Crown Entities Act 2004, and Employment Relations Act 2000, is required.

Leadership Capabilities:

The Chief Executive must demonstrate capacity to:

- Lead large-scale organisational strategy while ensuring operational detail and performance are maintained.
- Provide clear advice and support to the ITP Council.
- Manage substantial financial resources, including public funding, revenue generation, and capital asset portfolios.
- Lead complex people structures, managing multiple leadership layers and workforce planning needs.

- Oversee academic programme delivery and compliance at scale.
- Engage effectively with diverse stakeholders, including regional industries, central government agencies, High Schools, community organisations and Māori and iwi partners.

Attributes and Approach:

The Chief Executive must operate with a high level of integrity, public sector discipline, and strategic foresight. A structured, outcome-focused, and evidence-based leadership approach is essential.

This role requires a leader who is equally comfortable with high-level governance engagement and day-to-day organisational management, ensuring that both strategic direction and operational performance meet the highest standards of public service, academic quality, and financial sustainability.

ADDITIONAL REQUIREMENTS

The Chief Executive must operate with integrity, impartiality, and accountability at all times. A structured, analytical, and outcome-focused approach is required, along with resilience in managing ambiguity and organisational change.

The Chief Executive should show awareness of current educational trends, a visionary mindset, and be able to demonstrate entrepreneurial skills to seek out opportunities for organisational growth both locally and internationally.

The Chief Executive moves fluently between public sector governance expectations and industry-led decision-making, ensuring both are balanced and reflected in all organisational activities.

The Chief Executive is required to undertake national travel and work outside regular office hours as necessary to meet the demands of the role and maintain stakeholder engagement.

Specific to WITT:

- Understanding of the Taranaki regional economy, particularly the energy sector transition and its implications for workforce development and industry retraining.
- Experience managing or overseeing subsidiary organisations, with the ability to ensure strategic alignment between WITT and the New Zealand Institute of Highway Technology (NZIHT).
- Knowledge of or experience in sectors central to the Taranaki economy, including energy, engineering, dairy, food manufacturing, or infrastructure.
- Ability to build and maintain authentic relationships with multiple iwi in the region
- Demonstrated capacity to position a vocational education provider as a strategic partner in regional economic development and industry transformation.

Legal Requirements:

- Must meet all legal eligibility requirements under the Crown Entities Act 2004 and Education and Training Act 2020.
- Subject to Police vetting and full declaration of any potential or actual conflicts of interest.