Independent Chair

Reconnect Family Services Te Ope Pirita Limited (RFS-TOP)

Position Description

Organisation context

Official organisation name: Reconnect Family Services Te Ope Pirita Limited is the legal entity of Reconnect Trust Board's service company (NZBN 9429042453482). For clarity, this position description uses Reconnect Family Services Te Ope Pirita and the abbreviation RFS-TOP interchangeably.

Short description: RFS-TOP is a wholly owned service company of Reconnect Trust Board and operates on behalf of, and for the benefit of, the Trust in pursuance of its charitable purposes. RFS-TOP works to empower and connect young people, families and communities, guided by the values of Tika, Pono and Aroha.

Role purpose

The primary purpose of the Independent Chair is to provide effective and independent governance leadership to the RFS-TOP Board and to ensure the Board fulfils its responsibilities for the governance of RFS-TOP within the wider Reconnect Group. The Chair leads the Board in accordance with RFS-TOP's Constitution, relevant legislation, agreed delegations, governance policies, values and shareholder arrangements, while maintaining constructive relationships with Reconnect Trust Board and the Chief Executive.

The role is intended to strengthen governance, assurance, strategic focus and Board effectiveness. The Chair supports clear accountability between governance and management, with the Chief Executive as the primary governance-to-executive interface and accountable executive for RFS-TOP performance. The Chair may maintain an appropriate and direct working relationship with the Chief Operating Officer and other senior executives for information, expertise and assurance, provided that such engagement does not create a parallel reporting or accountability line, operational direction or duplicated management accountability.

Governance philosophy

The Chair will promote a governance approach that is strategic, future focused, values-led and clearly distinguished from management. The Chair will facilitate a Board culture that encourages independent thinking, constructive questioning, collective responsibility and disciplined decision-making, while ensuring management accountability remains clear.

- Focus Board attention on purpose, strategy, long-term sustainability, organisational performance and material risks.
- Encourage diverse views, constructive debate and collective decision-making.
- Maintain a clear distinction between governance and management, with management authority exercised through the Chief Executive and agreed delegations.
- Model Tika, Pono and Aroha through transparent, ethical and respectful leadership.
- Support a positive governance culture where the Board sets direction, establishes expectations, seeks assurance and provides constructive challenge without managing operations.
- Support effective alignment between RFS-TOP and Reconnect Trust Board, recognising RFS-TOP's responsibilities as a wholly owned subsidiary and the respective governance responsibilities of each Board.

Key accountabilities

- Lead the RFS-TOP Board effectively, including agenda setting, information flow, meeting discipline and constructive Board discussion.
- Ensure Board decisions, delegations and reporting arrangements support RFS-TOP's purpose, performance, financial sustainability, contractual obligations and long-term stewardship within the Reconnect Group.
- Ensure RFS-TOP is governed in accordance with its Constitution, relevant legislation, governance policies, values, shareholder requirements and agreed Reconnect Group arrangements.
- Facilitate Board oversight of strategy, annual planning, budgets, organisational performance, enterprise and material operational risks, quality, safeguarding, culture and other material matters through appropriate governance-level information and assurance.
- Maintain the Chief Executive as the Board's primary executive relationship, providing support, constructive challenge and clear governance expectations. Lead the Board in holding the Chief Executive to account for RFS-TOP performance within agreed strategy, annual objectives, delegations, risk appetite and Group governance arrangements.
- Maintain a constructive and, where useful, regular working relationship with the Chief Operating Officer and other senior executives for information, expertise and assurance. Such engagement may be direct, but must not create parallel accountability, operational direction, or substitute for the Chief Executive's accountability to the Board.
- Promote Board effectiveness through high-quality information, disciplined discussion, evaluation, succession planning and appropriate committee or director assignments. Communicate the Board's views through agreed governance channels and support clear accountability between RFS-TOP, Reconnect Trust Board and management.

Role boundaries

- The Chair acts through the RFS-TOP Board and does not exercise executive management authority.
- The Board holds the Chief Executive to account for RFS-TOP performance within the agreed Group governance framework. The Chief Executive is expected to maintain an effective working relationship with the Chair and sufficient engagement with the Board to discharge that accountability. Formal employment accountability for the Chief Executive is with the Chair of the Reconnect Trust Board and Chief Executive Delegated Authority Policy.
- The Chief Executive is responsible for the management structure, executive delegation and operational delivery of RFS-TOP. The Chair does not direct the Chief Operating Officer or other employees.
- Direct engagement between the Chair and the Chief Operating Officer or other senior executives is appropriate, and may be regular, where it supports governance information, specialist advice or assurance. It must not create a separate management relationship, alter executive reporting lines, or bypass the Chief Executive's accountability.
- Changes to executive roles and reporting lines should be guided by the board approved Chief Executive Delegated Authority Policy and Management Standard.

Key skills, experience and attributes

The following requirements separate core expectations from desirable additional strengths.

Must haves

- Demonstrated governance experience, including experience as a director and the capability to chair or lead a board or committee effectively.

- Strong understanding of directors' duties, subsidiary and group governance, Board accountability, financial stewardship, risk management, policy governance and organisational assurance.
- Ability to govern effectively within a parent-subsidiary structure, balancing RFS-TOP's legal and fiduciary responsibilities with the purpose, values and agreed governance arrangements of Reconnect Trust Board.
- Sound judgement, independence, integrity and the confidence to provide constructive challenge and hold management to account while maintaining respectful relationships.
- Ability to distinguish governance from management and to work effectively with the Chief Executive and senior executives without becoming operational or creating parallel reporting relationships.
- Commitment to Tika, Pono and Aroha, an understanding of Te Tiriti o Waitangi, and culturally responsive governance.
- A collaborative and inclusive leadership style that enables full board participation, constructive inquiry and collective ownership of decisions.

Desirable skills and experience

- Experience in complex social service, youth, whānau, community or adjacent service delivery environments.
- Knowledge of government contracting, procurement, tendering, commissioning, or social service sector funding arrangements.
- Commercial, partnership or business development experience relevant to organisational sustainability and growth.
- People and culture experience, including leadership development, workforce engagement, organisational culture, diversity and inclusion.
- Government relations, stakeholder engagement, advocacy, marketing, brand or communications experience.
- Digital enablement, ESG, quality improvement, safeguarding or service transformation experience.

Specific Chair attributes

- Relationship building – maintains effective working relationships with the RFS-TOP Board, Reconnect Trust Board Chair and Chief Executive, and a constructive direct relationship with the Chief Operating Officer and other relevant senior executives, while respecting agreed governance and management accountabilities.
- Emotional intelligence – demonstrates tact, diplomacy, influence and the ability to reconcile differing views constructively.
- Board leadership – draws on the collective expertise of directors, enables effective participation, supports disciplined decision-making and keeps the Board focused on governance-level matters.
- Time commitment – prepares for and contributes to meetings, Board business and stakeholder engagement as reasonably required.
- Integrity – acts ethically, manages conflicts of interest appropriately and exercises independent judgement in accordance with RFS-TOP's Constitution, legal duties and agreed Group governance arrangements.

Reconnect Group common competencies

In addition to the role-specific requirements above, the Chair is expected to demonstrate the following competencies common across the Reconnect Group:

Competency	Description
Diversity	Values lived experience and diverse perspectives, including whānau, age, gender, ethnicity and tenure.

Values aligned / purpose led	Governs in a way that is aligned to organisational purpose and values.
Passion and discipline	Role models commitment to improvement, focus, prioritisation and good decision-making.
Te Tiriti o Waitangi	Demonstrates an applied understanding of Te Tiriti o Waitangi in governance, including the ability to support partnership, participation, protection, equity and Māori aspirations through Board decision-making, strategic oversight, policy settings and organisational accountability
Collaborative / inclusive style	Works constructively with the Board, shareholder and management while maintaining clear governance boundaries and accountability.
Learning ethic	Contributes to continuous learning and development at Board level.
Creativity and innovation	Brings constructive, future-focused and innovative thinking to challenges.
Governance	Applies clear governance structures, delegations, policies and processes, including effective oversight of performance and assurance without becoming operational.
Strategic agility	Thinks broadly across the Group, keeps the Board focused on purpose and strategy, and critically assesses strategic opportunities and threats.
Finance and risk management	Understands financial stewardship, audit, capital management, enterprise risk, risk appetite and governance-level assurance.
Digital enablement and ESG	Understands the importance of digital maturity, environmental, social and governance matters and long-term sustainability.

Commitments

- Board meetings as determined by the Board.
- Meetings are normally held online, with at least two meetings face to face at Reconnect Family Services offices at 8 Puhinui Road, Manukau.
- Between meetings, Board business is usually conducted by email or phone, and Directors are required to keep in reasonable contact.

Acceptance

This position description was accepted by:

This ______ day of _____________ 20____

Signed: __________________________________