

Chief Communications and Engagement Officer

Reports to:	Chief Executive Officer	Position Status:	Permanent
Unit:	Communications and Engagement	Location:	To be agreed
Direct Reports:	[x]	Budget & Delegated Authority:	[x]
Band:	Executive	Date:	September 2025

OUR ORGANISATION

Earth Sciences NZ was established on 1 July 2025, through the merger of GNS and NIWA, with the upcoming acquisition of MetService further strengthening its capabilities. As part of the most significant reforms to New Zealand's science and innovation system in 30 years, Earth Sciences NZ is positioned as a leading-edge science organisation that excels in earth, environmental and natural resources science.

With six core science missions – Geological Hazards, Weather and Climate Hazards, Energy, Land and Freshwater, Atmosphere and Climate, and Oceans – Earth Sciences NZ is set to become a globally recognised science leader. By integrating multidisciplinary expertise and advanced technologies, the organisation will tackle complex environmental challenges and unlock opportunities for sustainable growth and development.

Following the MetService acquisition, Earth Sciences NZ will comprise approximately 1,500 staff across 22 sites, managing \$400 million in assets and generating \$370 million in annual revenue. Serving both the public and private sectors, the organisation plays a vital role in enhancing national resilience to natural hazards, supporting economic growth, and delivering innovative science for a sustainable future.

ROLE PURPOSE

The Chief Communications and Engagement Officer provides strategic leadership for all aspects of Earth Sciences New Zealand's communications, government engagement and reporting functions. Working closely with the Chief Executive Officer and Board, this role shapes and delivers enterprise-wide strategies that strengthen Earth Sciences NZ's national and global presence, enhancing its reputation and impact.

Key focus areas include building and maintaining strong stakeholder relationships, leading brand development and reputation management, and driving effective government and ministerial engagement. The role also oversees performance reporting, ensures organisational alignment through internal communications, amplifies the impact of science through targeted communications, and manages the organisation's digital presence to engage diverse audiences and stakeholders.

POSITION PRIORITIES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

Executive Leadership Accountabilities

- Champion Earth Sciences NZ's purpose, values, and commitment to Te Tiriti o Waitangi, modelling ethical leadership and integrity in all actions and decisions.
- Shape and deliver the organisation's strategic direction, fostering collaboration and alignment across all functions and offering innovative insights to inform and enhance the organisation's delivery of its core objectives.
- Ensure robust governance, risk management, and compliance with legal, regulatory, and public sector requirements.
- Promote health, safety, and wellbeing culture as a strategy priority, embedding it into systems, culture, and leadership practice.
- Apply a whole-of-science systems approach by actively collaborating across the broader science system, ensuring integration beyond an Earth Sciences NZ perspective.
- Engage effectively with the Board, government, iwi, sector partners, and stakeholders to advance Earth Sciences NZ's mission and reputation.
- Uphold collective accountability for organisational performance, financial sustainability, and continuous improvement, resource stewardship, and delivery of public-good science impact.

Strategic Leadership & Integration

- Lead the integration of the communications, engagement and reporting functions post-merger, ensuring alignment with organisational strategy and a unified approach across all sites.
- Drive transformation initiatives that enhance Earth Science NZ's brand, reputation, and stakeholder relationships, supporting scientific excellence and operational efficiency.
- Champion transparent, purposeful change management in all communications and engagement activities, fostering a culture of innovation and continuous improvement.
- Identify and manage strategic, operational, and reputational risks related to communications, engagement and public profile, ensuring business continuity and stakeholder confidence.

Strategic Communications and Engagement

- Lead the development and execution of Earth Sciences NZ's communications and engagement strategy, ensuring alignment with organisational objectives and scientific impact.
- Translate science outcomes and organisational achievements into compelling, audience-specific narratives that build understanding, trust, and support among government, industry, stakeholders, and the public.
- Build and maintain trusted, collaborative relationships with government, industry, iwi/Māori, universities, and across the science sector to enhance influence and strategic effectiveness.
- Provide strategic counsel and support to the CEO and Board on communications, engagement, and reputational matters.
- Represent Earth Sciences NZ in industry, institutional, and professional forums to promote the organisation's purpose and impact.

- Lead horizon-scanning and environmental scanning activities to inform the Board, Executive Leadership Team, and wider organisation on emerging communications, policy, and government priorities.

Brand, Reputation & Digital Presence

- Develop and lead Earth Sciences NZ's brand strategy and narrative, ensuring consistent and compelling storytelling across all internal and external channels.
- Oversee the branding of all company branded assets.
- Oversee the organisation's digital presence, including website, social media, and digital engagement platforms, leveraging analytics to drive continuous improvement.
- Lead proactive reputation management and issues response, including crisis and hazard communications, ensuring timely, accurate, and effective engagement with the public and stakeholders.
- Ensure readiness and responsiveness of the communications function, embedding 24/7 capability for public safety and resilience communications.

Government Relations

- Build and maintain strong relationships with government officials, policymakers, industry bodies, and advocacy groups to position Earth Sciences NZ as a trusted partner and thought leader.
- Develop and deliver clear, compelling messages, submissions, and briefings to government audiences, representing the organisation in consultations, hearings, and public forums as required.
- Provide strategic advice on ministerial and government engagement, aligning core messages and managing stakeholder and reputational risk.

Internal Communications

- Lead the development and implementation of an internal communications plan that fosters organisational alignment, employee engagement, and commitment to Earth Sciences NZ's objectives and brand.
- Ensure effective two-way communication across all levels of the organisation, supporting change management and major programmes of work.

Performance, Measurement and Reporting

- Monitor and report on communication and engagement metrics, demonstrating impact and alignment with Earth Sciences NZ's objectives and priorities.
- Provide regular reporting to the Board, shareholders, and stakeholders on communications performance, science impact and reputation.
- Use analytics and feedback to continuously improve communications effectiveness and reach.

People Leadership, Direction and Development

- Inspire and grow high-performing teams by shaping a collaborative, inclusive culture grounded in the Earth Sciences NZ's purpose, values, and commitment to Te Tiriti o Waitangi.
- Provide clear direction and alignment for the Communication, Engagement and Reporting function, ensuring efforts are focussed on achieving organisational objectives.

- Identify and develop the capabilities required to meet current and future business needs, promoting a culture of personal growth, succession planning and supporting capability building across the organisation.

Board and External Engagement

- Lead timely, confident engagement with the Board and relevant sub-committees on strategic communications, engagement, reporting, and reputational matters.
- Support the Chief Executive Officer in building strong, trust-based relationships with Shareholding Ministers, government officials, and key stakeholders through transparent, strategic communications and performance reporting.
- Build and maintain influential relationships with government, sector partners, advocacy groups, and internal stakeholders to advance Earth Sciences NZ's objectives and enhance its reputation.

Health, Safety and Wellbeing (HSW)

An executive leader at Earth Sciences New Zealand owns and champions a proactive HSW culture across the organisation. This includes:

- Modelling visible safety leadership and embedding HSW into strategic decision-making, planning, and delivery.
- Take personal accountability for organisational critical risks, ensuring they are identified, understood, and actively managed. This includes regular review of risk controls, assurance activities, and escalation of emerging risks.
- Demonstrate legal and ethical responsibility for HSW, recognising that executive leaders may be held personally accountable for failures in managing known risks.
- Lead by example through safety conversations, site visits, and engagement with frontline teams, reinforcing a culture of openness, learning, and continuous improvement.
- Ensure consistency and integration of HSW practices across Earth Sciences NZ, supporting a unified approach to wellbeing and risk management.
- Support incident investigations and corrective actions, ensuring timely response, appropriate support for affected workers, and effective implementation and review of improvements.
- Report risks and issues transparently and promptly to the Chief Executive and Board to ensure that critical information is surfaced and acted upon at the highest levels of the organisation.

Leadership Expectations

An executive leader at Earth Sciences New Zealand empowers and enables their teams for success—equipping people to deliver on our goals and foster a strong, positive culture. This includes:

- **Strategic Leadership:** Articulates a bold and future-focused vision, aligning teams and stakeholders around shared strategic priorities. Demonstrates foresight and influence in shaping organisational direction and leading transformative change.
- **Systems Thinking:** Enhances organisational and system-wide performance through fostering collaboration, championing innovation, and leading meaningful stakeholder engagement.
- **Adaptive Leadership:** Demonstrates curiosity, courageous decision-making, and inclusive leadership while navigating complexity with integrity and foresight. Embraces ambiguity as an

opportunity for innovation, modelling resilience and self-awareness in the face of uncertainty. Leads organisational adaptability by championing continuous learning and responding decisively to emerging challenges and opportunities across the organisation and science system.

- **Capability Development:** Builds organisational capability by empowering leaders at all levels, investing in talent development, and embedding a high-performance culture that supports growth, accountability, and innovation.
- **Performance and Accountability:** Drives ambitious outcomes through strategic prioritisation, effective resource stewardship, and a commitment to empowering others. Holds self and others accountable for delivering outcomes that advance organisational goals and science impact.

Responsibilities of all Employees

- Comply with all Earth Sciences NZ policies, procedures and frameworks, and act in line with the organisational values.
- Contribute to our healthy and safe workplace by following Health, Safety and Wellbeing (HSW) expectations outlined in and integrated into our operational practices and HSW Frameworks, including undertaking HSW training and participating in health monitoring programmes relevant to your work.
- Work effectively as a team member by fostering good relationships and supporting others by providing coverage of other functions as required and ensuring workloads are evenly spread.
- Have the flexibility to adapt and develop as the organisation and its environment evolves.

Key Working Relationships

Internal	External
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Executive Leadership Team, Board of Directors, Managers and Leaders 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Shareholding Ministers; MBIE; Senior Managers of DoC, MfE, MPI, MFAT, NEMA, National Hazards Commission, Iwi, CEOs and Senior Managers of regional councils; CEOs of business organisations and major corporates within New Zealand and globally; CEOs and members of Māori organisations /authorities; CEOs and Senior Managers of the Institute for Bioeconomy Science, Institute for Public Health and Forensic Science and the NZ Institute for Advanced Technology; the World Meteorological Organisation and national meteorological offices; senior leaders at national and international universities; international collaborators including offshore research institutions.

Person Specification

Qualifications and Experience

- A relevant post graduate tertiary qualification in Communications, Public Policy, Business, Strategy or a related discipline or experience, or equivalent capability gained through a combination of education and executive-level experience.
- 8+ years' experience leading a communications and engagement function in a large organisation.

Skills, Knowledge and Attributes

- Extensive experience designing and delivering integrated communication strategies across internal, external, and digital channels to build brand, influence, and engagement.
- Deep understanding of government systems, policy development, and public sector engagement, with a track record of building trusted relationships across central and local government.
- Skilled in managing complex reputational issues, media relations, and crisis communication with sound judgment and strategic foresight.
- Exceptional relationship-building skills across diverse stakeholder groups, including iwi, industry, academia, and international partners.
- Ability to translate scientific and strategic outcomes into compelling narratives that resonate with policymakers, funders, and the public.
- Experience leading high-performing, multidisciplinary teams, fostering a culture of collaboration, innovation, and continuous improvement.
- Proficient in leveraging digital platforms, analytics, and emerging technologies to enhance communication effectiveness and reach.
- Demonstrated understanding of Te Tiriti o Waitangi and tikanga Māori, with experience engaging meaningfully with Māori communities and organisations.
- Ability to engage at executive and board levels, contributing to governance discussions and shaping strategic direction.