

Position Description

Position Title:	Science Team Leader ('STL') – Environmental Science South
Reports To:	Science Group Manager
Direct Reports:	15
Key Relationships:	Science Team, Director Research Capability, STL cohort, People & Culture, Finance, Infrastructure, external collaboration partners, external funding bodies, and Government departments
Location:	Invermay or Lincoln

WHO WE ARE

We are passionate innovators, dedicated to making a difference to the future of New Zealand by delivering world-leading research and through complex problem solving across diverse agricultural areas. We are respected by the scientific community for thought leadership, trusted by industry partners for the value we add to the sector, and admired by farmers and governmental stakeholders for all that we do to keep New Zealand at the forefront of global agricultural excellence.

We go beyond innovation to maintain the role of AgResearch Group - New Zealand Institute for Bioeconomy Science Ltd as a leading collaborator and contributor to New Zealand's worldwide agricultural reputation.

Our Vision is to drive economic prosperity by transforming agriculture while incorporating the fundamental concepts of sustainability, environmental responsibility, and Vision Mātauranga.

POSITION SCOPE & PURPOSE

This role will lead a science team, ensuring it has the current and future capability which includes people at the forefront and supported by infrastructure and equipment that enables your team to deliver on strategic research priorities. Other points of key focus are the maintenance of well-developed business plans that drive innovation, project delivery and engagement; providing direction, developing the team and their career aspirations; and championing science expertise, creativity and quality for the team.

The role - working closely with People & Culture - will champion career progression opportunities, distinctive scientific expertise retention and growth, employee allocation and a culture shift to one of innovation, accountability and responsibility. This role also involves nurturing and championing science creativity to generate early-stage, novel science, innovation, and technology thinking and concepts that can contribute and drive our science engine and de-risk funding proposals, newly contracted projects and science investment strategies.

The Science Team Leader will dedicate 0.5 FTE to team leadership functions and 0.5 FTE to their own science. This Position Description reflects the team leadership components only.

KEY ACCOUNTABILITY AREAS

As Science Team Leader, you will provide visible and proactive leadership to ensure the delivery of high-quality science outcomes. You will maintain oversight of your team's project portfolio, tracking performance and addressing risks early, particularly where projects face challenges. Working closely with project managers, you will

help them overcome barriers, secure resources, and make pragmatic decisions. A key part of your role is supporting, coaching, and developing staff so they are empowered to deliver outstanding work, while also fostering collaboration across teams and with other leaders. You will actively manage utilisation and workload, balancing research delivery with the wellbeing, health, and safety of your team. Alongside this, you will manage budgets, align expenditure with team priorities, and provide time for professional development and wider organisational responsibilities. Looking ahead, you will plan for emerging science capability and workforce needs, aligning recruitment and development with strategic objectives.

In science leadership, you will act as both a thought leader and a connector. You will champion AgResearch Group's Te Ara Tika plan and MBIE's Vision Mātauranga Policy, ensuring kaupapa Māori research is embedded and partnerships with Māori researchers and organisations are genuine. You will contribute to capability mapping and ensure your team's science priorities align with organisational strengths and customer needs. By maintaining broad scientific literacy, you will provide credible input into planning and investment decisions, and represent the team's expertise across national and international forums. As a trusted source of knowledge, you will inspire colleagues, partners, and stakeholders with innovative ideas while strengthening AgResearch Group's reputation through collaboration.

As a leader, you will focus on unlocking the full potential of your people. You will nurture a culture that is outward-looking, creative, engaged, and accountable. Through clear expectations, constructive feedback, and recognition of achievement, you will create an environment where individuals are motivated and supported to grow. You will coach and develop talent, support emerging leaders, and build succession capability. In times of change, you will lead with clarity and empathy, ensuring resilience and alignment with organisational goals.

Your responsibilities also include financial and operational management, ensuring budgets, chargeable time targets, and efficiency goals are achieved while keeping science excellence and sustainability in balance. You will contribute to continuous improvement by embedding compliance and best practice into daily activities, while helping to shape organisational policy, processes, and systems.

You will be a visible advocate for health, safety, and wellbeing, embedding proactive risk management and creating a culture where staff thrive. This includes modelling safe behaviours, addressing hazards promptly, and ensuring all staff are aware of their responsibilities. At times, you may also take on additional responsibilities as required by the Science Group Manager, supporting the wider success of the organisation.

SCIENCE OPERATIONS AND DELIVERY

- Maintain high-level knowledge and broad familiarity with the portfolio of projects initiated, led and contributed to by direct reports, with the priority on supporting any project showing as red or amber in Waka.
- Oversee performance of project managers in project delivery and respond to requests from project sponsors for assistance in overcoming delivery barriers.
- Support, coach and develop your team to achieve high quality results
- Support project managers to effectively resource project teams with the right capability, and ensure cross team collaboration with other leaders as necessary
- Work with Team Leader cohort to ensure individual employee utilisation is optimised while ensuring their health, safety and wellbeing is prioritised

- Work collaboratively with other Science Capability Leaders (Director Capability, Science Group Managers, Science Team Leaders) using a right teams process to collectively deliver optimum annual utilisation projections
- Ensure non-revenue time is appropriately apportioned, and time provided to cover administration such as professional development activities, training, and other formal activities e.g. H&SE Rep, lab manager roles.
- Ensure STL budgets are managed to effectively resource team-based expenditure with priority given to training and development costs associated with needs of the team.
- Identify current and future science capability and workforce needs as part of annual capability planning processes (including strategic workforce and recruitment plans), ensuring individual performance objectives and development plans align.

SCIENCE LEADERSHIP

- Understands and promotes the application of AgResearch's Te Ara Tika plan and MBIE's Vision Mātauranga Policy to projects and activities, has sustained active involvement in te ao Māori development and contributes to co-innovation with Māori led, Māori centred and kaupapa Māori research.
- Contribution to capability mapping within each Science Group.
- Support the strategic priorities by ensuring key capabilities are embedded into Science Business Plans and these are actively managed.
- Provide timely input and feedback into science capability (personnel and capex) decision-making.
- Champion the Strategic Priorities and your team's Business Plans with employees.
- Ensuring Business Plans operational-level key performance indicators ('KPI's') are supported by appropriate capabilities, and research portfolios are aligned to our distinctive skills and science capacity.
- Provide informed opinion in their field of expertise – building credibility as a trusted source who moves and inspires people with innovative ideas.
- Define and support appropriate partnerships by design, that enhance and complement our internal skill sets with national and international collaborations.

TEAM LEADERSHIP

- Champion a culture shift that is informed by end-users and focussed on creativity, engagement, accountable delivery, and collaboration.
- Lead a high performing team in unlocking business value by coaching, developing and managing employees to deliver innovative solutions.
- Enhance the employee experience by defining performance expectations, providing regular feedback, rewarding, and recognising team members appropriately and taking corrective action where necessary.
- Ensure there is attraction, retention, and development of leadership within the team for high-potential and emerging talent.
- Champion AgResearch values by demonstrating them and encouraging others to do so.
- Lead and manage change effectively within the team.
- Recruit and/or grow the professional development of employees to achieve delivery of the required capabilities and performance objectives now and into the future.

FINANCIAL

- Ensure team budgets and employee's chargeable time allocation targets are maintained.
- Identify and deploy opportunities to improve operational efficiencies of the science engine.

POLICY & PROCESS

- Actively lead continuous improvement by taking ownership to manage and improve compliance and best practice in relation to all policies and processes. Proactively lead the team to review and provide input into strategy, policy, and system development.

HEALTH & SAFETY

- Provide H&S leadership by ensuring a healthy and safe workplace and culture by developing, implementing, and managing H&S processes and systems that achieve industry best practices and comply with legislative and company guidelines and requirements.
- Ensures awareness of own responsibilities and the procedures to follow in relation to health and safety.
- Identifies and reports any hazards, near misses or incidents as per prescribed policy and procedures.
- Demonstrates safe workplace behaviour by taking all practicable steps to ensure own and other's safety in the workplace.
- Attends scheduled Health and Safety training and development initiatives on a regular basis.

INFORMATION MANAGEMENT

- Ensure that all information created or received during the course of your work is managed as per AgResearch Information Management Policy. This includes naming, storing, classifying, and ensuring it is available to other employees as per the Policy.

OTHER

- Carry out any other reasonable duties as required by the Science Group Manager.

PERSON SPECIFICATION

The person best suited to this position will possess the following.

EDUCATION & QUALIFICATIONS

- PhD (or equivalent experience) in a relevant science field is preferred.

CAPABILITIES & EXPERIENCE

Essential

- People Leadership & Development: Coaches and mentors' employees, fostering accountability, collaboration, innovation, and clear performance expectations.
- Strategic Project Leadership: Delivers complex project portfolios on time, resolving risks while balancing strategic and operational demands.
- Scientific Capability & Workforce Planning: Anticipates future science needs, leads workforce planning, and develops staff through structured pathways.
- Resource & Financial Stewardship: Manages budgets transparently, optimises people and resources, and aligns expenditure with team priorities.
- Health, Safety & Risk Leadership: Champions wellbeing, embeds proactive risk management, and ensures compliance with legislation and standards.
- Continuous Improvement: Drives best practice adoption, streamlines processes, and ensures compliance with organisational policies and systems.
- Integrity & Organisational Contribution: Provides credible strategic input, leads with transparency, and strengthens organisational reputation and effectiveness.

Desirable

- Policy Influence: Shapes organisational and sector policy directions through science leadership.
- Efficiency & Innovation: Improves efficiency without compromising scientific quality.
- External Engagement: Builds collaborations and partnerships that enhance science impact and reputation.

COMPETENCIES

Organisational wide competencies – these are the competencies determined by the organisation as critical to every role.	
Accountability	Accepts responsibility for one's actions regardless of outcomes.
Caring About People	Displays sensitivity towards the attitudes, feelings, or circumstances of others.
Developing People	Provides support, coaching, training, and career direction to others.
Integrity	Acts honestly in accordance with moral or ethical principles
Driving Results	Accomplishes goals, completes tasks, and achieves results.
Leveraging Diversity	Respects and values individual differences to obtain a desired effect or result.
Relationship Building	Develops collaborative relationships to facilitate current and future objectives.
Self-Development	Actively acquires new knowledge and skills to remain current with and/or grow beyond job requirements.
Role based competencies – these are the competencies required to perform this role.	
Decision Making	Uses sound judgment to make timely and effective decisions.
Delegating	Assigns work to others based on tasks, skills, and workloads.
Driving Change	Champions new methods, systems, and processes to improve performance.
Influencing Others	Persuades other to help achieve organisational goals and objectives.
Listening to Others	Listens and restates the ideas and opinions of others to improve mutual understanding.
Managing Conflict	Resolves hostilities and disagreements between others.
Managing Resources	Coordinates people and financial and material capital to maximise efficiency and performance.
Solving Problems	Identifies solutions given available information.
Taking Smart Risks	Evaluates trade-offs between potential costs and benefits and acts accordingly.
Team Building	Assembles productive groups based upon required skills, goals and tasks