

POSITION DESCRIPTION

Date:	September 2026
Position Title:	Chief Executive
Location:	Kenepuru, Mt Albert or Christchurch Science Centres
Group:	Chief Executive Office
Reports to:	Board Chair

ABOUT PHF SCIENCE

PHF Science (the New Zealand Institute for Public Health and Forensic Science) is a New Zealand Public Research Organisation (PRO). Our purpose is to support communities to be safer, fairer and better prepared. We are the specialists in public health and forensic science and are critical partners with government agencies and regulators in the health and justice sectors, as well as community organisations, Māori, universities and other research institutions and private sector organisations. Our science services, research, and innovation underpin to deliver the following impacts:

- **Better health outcomes** – earlier detection, better decisions and stronger preparedness and response, resulting in less illness and harm
- **Safer communities and a stronger justice system** – trusted forensic evidence and science that enable better investigations and decisions and support fair and effective justice.
- **Greater value from science** – critical national capability protected, more science translated into solutions that are used, avoided costs and clear impact from government investment.

Our primary role is providing specialist science services, research, innovations and leadership that support a healthy, safe and just society and contribute to a strong economy; and delivering trusted scientific evidence that enables risks to be anticipated, mitigated and managed. This means diseases and hazards to humans are monitored, responded to, and increasingly predicted; food is safe; new and illicit drugs are understood and tracked; evidence from crime scenes is rigorously analysed to support justice and make our communities safer – and much more. As well as preventing harm, this work further serves the public good, supporting New Zealand's productivity and building our resilience. It is on these core foundations that New Zealand can prosper and grow.

Our close and practical understanding of national needs, including longstanding commitment to Te Tiriti and uplifting outcomes for Māori, along with strong networks and partnerships, means we are well positioned to drive impact from our science and realising further benefits and economic growth for New Zealand.

Our focus on science excellence is underpinned by our commitment to building a talented workforce, effective systems, and strong connectivity across the organisation and beyond. Through our strong relationships with decision-makers, global networks, industry, community engagement and open digital channels, we aim for our science to be accessible, useable and used.

Our work together is guided by the PHF Science values:

- **Our team spirit** (*Mahi Tahi*) *Great people working together as one team*
- **Our quality counts** (*Mahi rangatira*) *Standing out through our excellence and world class expertise*
- **We do the right thing** (*Mahi pono*) *Upholding integrity and independence no matter what*
- **We push boundaries** (*Mahi auaha*) *Meeting challenges with fresh thinking and creative approaches*

THE ROLE

The role leads the organisation in delivering health security and forensic scientific and research services, leadership and nationally critical infrastructure.

The Chief Executive is accountable to the Board for the effective leadership and management of PHF Science, the delivery of agreed strategy and meeting performance expectations, and the provision of timely, high-quality advice to support Board governance and decision-making.

The Chief Executive provides enterprise leadership across PHF Science's people, science capability, infrastructure, partnerships, financial sustainability, reputation and impact. The role is responsible for ensuring the organisation operates with scientific integrity, public accountability, commercial discipline and a clear focus on outcomes for New Zealanders.

ACCOUNTABILITIES

Accountability area	Expectations
Strategy, system leadership and national impact	• Lead PHF Science's contribution to New Zealand's public health, forensic science, justice, environmental health, food safety and national resilience priorities. • Work with the Board to set and deliver PHF Science's long-term strategic direction, annual priorities and performance expectations. • Position PHF Science as a nationally significant Public Research Organisation, ensuring its science, services and advice are visible, trusted, accessible and used. • Anticipate future risks, opportunities and system needs and ensure PHF Science is well positioned to respond to changing science, policy, technology, funding and community environments.
Science excellence, integrity and future capability	• Uphold the scientific integrity, independence, quality and security of PHF Science's science, evidence and specialist services. • Ensure PHF Science's scientific capabilities remain leading edge in areas relevant to New Zealand's public health, forensic science and national resilience needs. • Prioritise high-impact science and specialist services that generate public, social, economic and scientific value for New Zealand. • Strengthen future science capability, including through interdisciplinary collaboration, digital, data, AI and emerging technologies, and partnerships across the national and international science system.
Organisational performance and financial sustainability	• Lead PHF Science as a financially sustainable, high-performing and publicly accountable organisation. • Ensure effective business planning, resource allocation, cost control, revenue strategy, asset oversight and transparent reporting. • Drive productivity, responsiveness and operational discipline while maintaining scientific quality, service reliability and public trust. • Identify opportunities to translate science capability into public value, strategic revenue, innovation and national benefit.

People, culture and transformation	• Build a values-led, inclusive and high-performing culture that reflects PHF Science's purpose and values. • Lead organisational transformation with clarity, discipline and empathy, sustaining momentum while building confidence and capability. • Develop leadership depth, workforce resilience and future capability across PHF Science. • Ensure staff understand the organisation's strategy, priorities and expectations, and are supported to contribute to PHF Science's impact.
Partnerships, Te Tiriti and stakeholder influence	• Build trusted and collaborative relationships with Māori, communities, Ministers, monitoring agencies, government, regulators, customers, partners, industry, the science system and international collaborators. • Lead PHF Science in giving effect to its commitments under Te Tiriti o Waitangi, strengthening organisational capability, relationships and impact for Māori and communities across Aotearoa New Zealand. • Work with the Board to maintain effective relationships with key Ministers, monitoring agencies and system leaders. • Communicate PHF Science's value and impact with credibility and clarity, strengthening its reputation, influence and partnerships.
Governance, risk, assurance and public accountability	• Provide timely, accurate and high-quality advice and reporting to the Board to support effective governance, informed decision-making and a no-surprises relationship. • Ensure PHF Science complies with legislative, regulatory, funding, ethical, privacy, information management and policy requirements. • Maintain effective systems for enterprise risk management, assurance, compliance, business continuity, incident management and reputation management. • Ensure shareholder and public accountability obligations are met, including required reporting, records management and transparent performance monitoring.
Health, safety, wellbeing and protective security	• Provide visible leadership of health, safety and wellbeing, ensuring PHF Science has a strong safety culture, effective systems, clear accountabilities and active monitoring of risks and performance. • Ensure protective security, information security, privacy and related obligations are understood, embedded and upheld across the organisation. • Promote a safe, respectful and resilient working environment that supports wellbeing, inclusion and sustainable performance.

KEY WORKING RELATIONSHIPS

Internal:

- Board Chair and Directors
- Executive Leadership Team
- Science leaders, researchers and specialist teams
- Wider staff community and future leadership capability across PHF Science

External:

- Ministers and central government agencies across science, health, finance and justice
- Health and justice sector leaders and end users of PHF Science's expertise and services
- Iwi, Māori partners and community stakeholders
- Industry, commercial partners and other Public Research Organisations
- Local and international universities, research institutions and strategic collaborators
- Media and wider public audiences interested in the organisation's impact

DELEGATED AUTHORITY

Delegated authority is exercised in accordance with the PHF Science Delegations Policy.

ESSENTIAL EXPERIENCE AND TECHNICAL SKILLS

- Advanced tertiary qualifications in a relevant discipline, with recognised credibility in science, health, justice, public policy or a similarly complex evidence-based environment.
- Significant executive leadership experience in a complex organisation, with a track record of leading strategy, organisational performance, transformation, financial sustainability and long-term capability development.
- Proven ability to work effectively with Boards, Ministers, central agencies, regulators and policy leaders, with strong political acuity and public accountability.
- Strong understanding of scientific integrity, independence, quality systems, ethics, data security and evidence reliability in high-consequence public, regulatory, health or justice settings.
- Demonstrated ability to grow sustainable revenue, manage complex funding environments and translate science capability into public value, strategic revenue, innovation and national benefit.
- Outstanding relationship and influencing skills, including experience building trusted relationships with Māori, communities, customers, partners, staff and the wider science system.
- Proven ability to lead an expert, multidisciplinary workforce, strengthen culture and capability, that understands and navigates ongoing change successfully.
- Strong understanding of the science, technology and research landscape, including digital, data, AI and emerging technologies, and their implications for science capability, service delivery and organisational performance.

BEHAVIOURAL COMPETENCIES

Competency	Expected behaviours
Strategic and system leadership	• Sets a clear and compelling direction for PHF Science, connecting its purpose, science capability and public value to national priorities. • Thinks at enterprise and system level, anticipating future risks, opportunities and capability requirements. • Makes sound strategic choices in complex, ambiguous and high-consequence environments.
Scientific integrity and judgement	• Upholds the independence, quality, integrity and security of PHF Science's science, evidence and specialist services. • Demonstrates respect for scientific expertise and creates the conditions for excellent, ethical and impactful science. • Applies sound judgement in balancing scientific independence, public accountability, operational delivery and stakeholder expectations.
Leading change and transformation	• Leads organisational change with clarity, discipline and empathy, sustaining momentum while building confidence and capability. • Encourages innovation, constructive challenge and fresh thinking to improve performance, productivity and impact. • Uses technology, data and emerging tools, including AI where appropriate, to support better ways of working and future capability.
Commercial and organisational acumen	• Leads PHF Science as a financially sustainable, high-performing and publicly accountable organisation. • Identifies opportunities to translate science capability into public value, strategic revenue, innovation and national benefit. • Makes disciplined decisions about investment, resources, risk and performance to support long-term sustainability.
Partnership, influence and political nous	• Builds trusted relationships across government, Māori, communities, the science system, industry, regulators and international partners. • Communicates with clarity, credibility and confidence, adapting messages for Board, Ministers, partners, staff and public audiences. • Navigates complex stakeholder, political and system dynamics with judgement, integrity and a clear focus on outcomes for New Zealanders.
People, culture and capability leadership	• Builds an inclusive, values-led culture where people feel connected to purpose and empowered to do their best work. • Develops leadership depth, organisational capability and workforce resilience for current and future needs. • Models PHF Science's values through visible, ethical and respectful leadership.
Te Tiriti leadership and cultural capability	• Leads in a way that gives effect to PHF Science's commitments under Te Tiriti o Waitangi. • Builds trusted and enduring relationships with Māori and supports organisational capability to work effectively with Māori. • Ensures PHF Science's work is relevant, respectful and impactful for Māori and communities across Aotearoa New Zealand.
Integrity, resilience and accountability	• Demonstrates high personal integrity, courage and sound judgement in all aspects of leadership. • Remains calm, resilient and constructive under pressure, particularly in high-profile, sensitive or high-risk situations. • Takes accountability for decisions, performance and organisational impact, ensuring there are no surprises for the Board.

This position description may be amended by the Board, in consultation with the CE, from time to time to reflect organisational priorities and requirements.