

New Zealand Airports Association (NZ Airports)

Position Description

Position: Chief Executive

Location: Wellington

Reports to: Chair of the NZ Airports' Executive Committee

Background

NZ Airports is the national membership association for New Zealand's airport network - from major international gateways to small regional aerodromes. Its members are owners and operators of airports, corporate and aviation-related organisations, and individuals with an interest in the sector.

The association operates in a complex, multi-stakeholder environment. Its membership spans airports of vastly different scale and commercial circumstance, its policy agenda intersects with government, regulators, airlines, communities, and consumers, and its credibility rests on being respected by all parts of that system.

NZ Airports' purpose is to:

- Represent and advance members' interests in legislative, regulatory, and policy matters affecting the aviation sector.
- Advocate for a well-functioning, resilient national air network that supports New Zealand's connectivity, prosperity, and economic growth.
- Provide members with timely intelligence, analysis, and practical support on developments affecting airport operations and the aviation system.
- Convene and facilitate action across the membership and with system partners on issues that require coordinated responses.
- Build the credibility and visibility of New Zealand airports as essential long-term investors in their communities and in the national economy.

Purpose of the Role

The Chief Executive leads NZ Airports' strategy, advocacy, and operations, and is the primary relationship holder across government, industry, and the media. The CE reports to the Chair of the Executive Committee and leads a small, high-performing team. The role requires both strategic depth and hands-on delivery.

Key Accountabilities

Strategy and planning

- Leading the development of NZ Airports' strategic direction, with a clear view of both the immediate policy environment and the long-term structural conditions that will affect the success of the airport network.
- Identifying emerging issues and positioning NZ Airports to prepare and respond with evidence and credibility.
- Building and maintaining an understanding of relevant international and national developments in policy and regulation and industry trends.
- Maintaining strong strategic and annual planning processes to produce effective plans for approval by the Executive Committee.

Relationships, engagement and advocacy

- Developing and maintaining effective strategic relationships with key stakeholders, including NZ Airports' members, aviation industry organisations, government agencies, regulators, local government, Ministers and MPs.
- Serving as NZ Airports' primary voice with media and on relevant industry bodies.
- Developing and prosecuting policy positions that are evidence-led, analytically credible, and grounded in the public interest.
- Ensuring airport views are developed and progressed in all types of policy and regulatory consultations.

Convening and membership

- Maintaining active, substantive relationships with the full membership - understanding what matters to different parts of the network and ensuring that members of all sizes can see their interests progressing somewhere in NZ Airports' work.
- Building the collective capability of the membership through shared intelligence, best practice exchange, and sector-wide initiatives.
- Leading forums and events that bring together airports and the airport community, including the association's annual conference.

Operational leadership

- Leading, developing, and supporting a small team to deliver NZ Airports' work programme to a high standard, maintaining a culture of ownership, rigour, and mutual accountability.
- Ensuring strong project management disciplines are in place so that commitments to members, government, and the Executive Committee are met reliably and on time.
- Overseeing NZ Airports' communications channels, data and intelligence capabilities, and external profile, ensuring the association is visible, credible, and useful to those it seeks to influence.

Governance and financial stewardship

- Supporting the Executive Committee to fulfil its governance function effectively, providing clear, complete, and candid reporting with no surprises.
- Preparing and managing the annual budget and operating plan, ensuring NZ Airports remains financially stable and that resources are allocated to the highest-value work.
- Ensuring compliance with all statutory, regulatory, and contractual obligations.
- Maintaining appropriate risk, continuity, and HR frameworks for an organisation of NZ Airports' scale.
- Ensuring NZ Airports meets its obligations as an incorporated society, including maintaining its rules, managing member processes, and supporting the Executive Committee to fulfil its statutory duties as officers of the society.

Person Specifications

This Chief Executive role requires a credible senior leader with strategic and operational expertise in regulatory policy, government relations, and multi-stakeholder system management. Aviation industry experience is valuable but not essential. More important is the ability to build trust and credibility in a membership organization and with a wide range of people; understanding of how to engage on both strategic and technical policy and draw on the expertise and feedback of others; and the resilience and adaptability to sustain high-quality work across a fast-moving and varied agenda.

Knowledge, Skills and Experience

- Demonstrated success engaging at Ministerial and senior official level - able to read political situations with accuracy, maintain relationships across the political spectrum, and advocate effectively without compromising independence or credibility.
- Strong analytical capability in regulatory and economic policy - able to engage with technical arguments, commission and interpret evidence, and translate complexity into positions that hold up to scrutiny.
- Experience designing and leading multi-stakeholder processes - convening parties with different interests around shared problems and producing outcomes that would not have emerged without that facilitation.
- Track record of building and sustaining trust-based relationships across a wide range of stakeholders, including those with competing interests, over time.
- Experience working with or within a governance board - understanding the distinction between governance and management, and supporting a board to make good decisions.
- Competence managing a small organisation's finances, operations, and legal compliance, including the obligations of an incorporated society or equivalent entity.
- Public communication capability - comfortable fronting media, presenting to select committees, and writing for external audiences in a way that is clear, credible, and well-calibrated to context.

- Inspires and leads others towards high levels of performance.

Personal Qualities

- Diplomatic and politically aware.
- Demonstrates an intellectual and professional leadership style that supports the attainment of respect and credibility by others.
- Personal commitment to organisational excellence, displays honesty, integrity, and a strong sense of ethics in all decisions and actions.
- Demonstrates systems thinking and an open engagement style.
- Resilient and remains calm and deliberate under conditions of stress.