Strategic Communications Manager

Contract Type: Full time, permanent
Location: Auckland

About Te Ara Ahunga Ora Retirement Commission

Te Ara Ahunga Ora is the office of the Retirement Commissioner. Te Ara Ahunga Ora aims to help New Zealanders to retire with confidence. Retiring with confidence means New Zealanders feel secure that they'll have resources to live and the know-how to make ends meet.

We focus on three areas; Retirement Policies, Retirement Villages and Financial Capability. As part of our role we advise Government on the policies that will enhance retirement outcomes for New Zealanders. We also help support individuals to better prepare for retirement, and we contribute to better understanding of what retirement means in the 21st century. Times are changing.

TĀ MĀTOU PŪTAKE
OUR PURPOSE
Improving financial futures

TĀ MĀTOU WHAKAKITENGA
OUR VISION
A better retirement for all

TĀ MĀTOU KAUPAPA MĀTĀMUA
OUR STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES
Provide ***trusted information***, ***informed advocacy,*** and ***effective collaboration*** on retirement income, retirement villages, and financial wellbeing.

OUR VALUES
Kia manawanui Let us be big hearted
E tipu, e rea We embrace the best of both worlds to flourish
Me hoe tahi We paddle as one
He taonga te pono We treasure truth

Position purpose

The Strategic Communications Manager leads the development and implementation of a deliberate, organisation-wide strategic communications approach that strengthens the organisation's influence, reputation, reach and impact.

The role is responsible for ensuring the organisation communicates with clarity, consistency and purpose—connecting its strategy, evidence, interventions, partnerships and impact to the audiences that matter.

This is an enabling and strategic leadership role. Rather than owning every communication activity across the organisation, the Strategic Communications Manager builds the strategy, systems,

frameworks, playbooks and internal capability that enable leaders and teams to communicate effectively and consistently. The role balances long-term strategic communications planning with the ability to respond quickly and effectively to emerging issues, opportunities, stakeholder needs and media enquiries.

The Strategic Communications Manager is supported by a Communications Specialist who provides delivery, coordination and specialist communications support.

Key aspects of the role include

- Lead the development and implementation of an organisation-wide strategic communications strategy connected to organisational priorities and long-term outcomes.
- Build the frameworks, decision rights, playbooks and capability that enable teams to communicate confidently without creating unnecessary central approval bottlenecks.
- Coordinate integrated communications planning across the organisation so activity is aligned, prioritised and mutually reinforcing.
- Strengthen organisational influence, reputation and public understanding through clear narratives, thought leadership and strategic positioning.
- Lead media responses and emerging communications issues with sound judgement, political awareness, pace and composure.
- Measure communications effectiveness and use evidence to continuously improve impact.
- Lead, support and develop the Communications Specialist.
- Work closely with the Retirement Commissioner to ensure all external activity aligns with communications strategy.
- Ensure communications strategy is aligned with organisational deliverables, central government performance expectations and National Strategy for Financial Capability.
- Partner with Leadership Team to keep across all organisational developments and cross team activity.
- Manage proactive and constructive relationships with key central government, media and external communication stakeholders.
- Work proactively with media and partnerships to ensure proactive public relations and brand.
- Manage Communications Specialist to ensure high performance and alignment to strategic vision.

Working relationships

Reports to:	Operations Director
Member of:	Operations team
Direct reports:	Communications Specialist
Internal relationships:	Commissioner and Leadership Team; Strategic Partnerships Manager; subject matter experts and teams across Te Ara Ahunga Ora.
External relationships:	Media and communications networks; external partners and stakeholders; government and public sector agencies; relevant sector and community organisations.

Areas of accountability and what great looks like

Accountability	What you deliver	What great looks like
Deliberate strategic communications	• Develop and maintain an organisation-wide communications strategy that supports organisational priorities, reputation and long-term impact. • Set clear communications objectives, priority audiences, channel approaches and messaging strategies. • Maintain an integrated communications roadmap and forward calendar. • Review and evolve the strategy as organisational priorities and the external environment change.	• Communications are deliberately connected to organisational priorities, audiences and desired outcomes. • The organisation anticipates opportunities and plans communications rather than operating primarily in reactive mode. • The role thinks strategically, tests assumptions and engages leaders and teams in a clear communications direction. • Resources are focused where communications can make the greatest contribution.
An enabling communications framework	• Develop and maintain the strategic communications playbook, messaging architecture, audience frameworks, brand and tone guidance, planning templates, media protocols and measurement frameworks. • Establish clear decision rights and risk-based thresholds that define what teams can publish without review and what requires the Manager's review and approval. • Provide proportionate quality assurance for external communications and maintain oversight of high-risk, high-profile or strategically significant material. • Keep frameworks practical, current and easy to use.	• Teams can communicate confidently and efficiently within clear guardrails. • The Manager provides assurance where it adds value without becoming a bottleneck. • High-risk or strategically significant communications receive timely, expert review and a clear green light. • Standards are consistent and tools are actively used rather than sitting on a shelf.
Stronger organisational communications capability	• Coach leaders to communicate effectively with different audiences. • Support subject matter experts to translate complex information into clear and compelling communications. • Develop guidance, training and practical support for teams.	• Communications capability is distributed across the organisation while strategic coordination and quality remain strong. • Leaders and teams understand what they can progress independently and when to seek specialist advice or approval.

Accountability	What you deliver	What great looks like
	• Build confidence in applying the playbook, decision rights and strategic frameworks.	• People produce clearer, more audience-centred communications and take ownership within agreed guardrails. • The role develops others through coaching, feedback and practical learning.
Integrated communications planning	• Coordinate strategic communications planning across major initiatives and teams. • Identify upcoming communications needs, overlaps, dependencies and opportunities to amplify impact. • Manage the organisation-wide communications calendar and help teams prioritise activity where resources are limited. • Connect communications activity to strategy, evidence, intervention, partnerships and impact priorities.	• Different teams communicate in ways that reinforce the organisation's overall narrative and priorities. • Activity is aligned, sequenced and mutually reinforcing rather than fragmented. • The role influences across organisational boundaries, creates clarity and sustains momentum without relying on formal authority. • Colleagues experience the function as enabling, pragmatic and focused on collective outcomes.
Influence and reputation	• Develop narratives that clearly articulate Te Ara Ahunga Ora's purpose, value and impact. • Translate evidence, insights and impact into compelling stories for priority audiences. • Support thought leadership, strategic positioning and contributions to important national conversations. • Ensure communications reinforce partnership and wider influencing strategies.	• Priority audiences understand what Te Ara Ahunga Ora does, why it matters and the difference it is making. • The organisation's public profile and credibility support its strategic influence. • Messages are clear, evidence-based and tailored to different audiences and contexts. • The role demonstrates sound system awareness, political judgement and leadership impact.
Media and emerging issues	• Manage and coordinate responses to media enquiries, emerging issues and changes in the external environment. • Advise leaders and spokespeople and prepare key messages and briefing materials. • Monitor communications and reputation risks and opportunities. • Lead or support issues and crisis communications when required.	• Media enquiries and emerging issues are handled calmly, quickly and strategically. • Advice balances organisational purpose, public interest, reputation, political context and practical delivery. • Leaders are well prepared and communications are accurate, consistent and timely. • The role shows courage, decisiveness, integrity, resilience and composure

Accountability	What you deliver	What great looks like
		when information is incomplete or circumstances change.
Evidence of communications impact	• Develop meaningful measures and KPIs for reach, engagement, audience response, reputation and influence. • Evaluate major communications activity and assess whether it has changed awareness, understanding or behaviour. • Use data and audience insight to improve strategy and delivery. • Report communications performance and impact to organisational leadership.	• Performance reporting focuses on impact rather than the volume of activity delivered. • Leaders understand what is working, what is not and where the organisation should adapt. • The role analyses evidence critically, is transparent about limitations and adjusts its approach in response to learning. • Communications decisions and investment are increasingly evidence-based.
People and one-organisation leadership	• Set clear priorities and expectations for the Communications Specialist and allocate work effectively. • Provide regular coaching, feedback and development support. • Balance strategic planning with responsive delivery and maintain appropriate oversight of quality and risk. • Contribute actively to the Operations team and wider organisational leadership, modelling curiosity, integrity, resilience and adaptability.	• The Communications Specialist is clear about outcomes, supported to perform and growing in capability. • Work is delegated appropriately, with autonomy matched to experience, risk and context. • Operational delivery supports the wider strategic communications agenda. • The role works collaboratively, seeks feedback, provides constructive challenge and supports collective decisions once made.

Our values in action

Value Statement	Examples of the value in action
Kia manawanui *Let us be big hearted*	• Advocates for those in need • Champions change to drive equitable outcomes • Acts with aroha and puts others before themselves • Treats people as they would like to be treated – with respect and empathy • Acknowledges and celebrates the achievements of others • Creates a safe and welcoming space where everyone feels comfortable to contribute
Me hoe tahi *We paddle as one*	• Is inclusive and actively seeks input and feedback from their colleagues and other teams • Connects with and inspires people to build great relationships internally and externally • Considers perspectives other than their own

	• Respects the opinions of others even when they don't agree • Helps glue the organisation into one team
E tipu, e rea *We embrace the best of both worlds to flourish*	• Focusses on the opportunities a dual worldview presents, not the obstacles • Introduces new ways of doing and thinking that include viable mātauranga Māori based alternatives • Considers diverse cultural viewpoints in their work and workplace • Consistently looks outward, not just in • Actively increases their own knowledge and cultural capability • Prizes the innovation that emerges from respect for difference
He taonga te pono *We treasure truth*	• Prioritises the kaupapa, the higher purpose • Is transparent, truthful and honest • Takes ownership and responsibility • Does what's right, even when no one's watching • Follows through on commitments • Acts without ego • Takes a balanced, impartial approach

Essential skills and experience

- Significant experience in strategic communications, public relations, corporate communications or a related field.
- Degree in Communications, Public Relations, Media, Business or Strategic Management or relevant experience in a senior communications role with experience in partnering with executive leadership teams, boards and senior stakeholders.
- Demonstrated experience developing and implementing organisation-wide communications strategies.
- Strong understanding of audience segmentation, strategic messaging, narratives, channels and campaign planning.
- Experience building communications capability and enabling others through frameworks, coaching and practical tools.
- Experience establishing clear communications decision rights, approval thresholds and proportionate quality assurance.
- Strong judgement and political awareness, including experience managing reputation and sensitive communications issues.
- Experience managing media relationships and responding to media enquiries.
- Excellent written and verbal communication, with the ability to translate complex information into clear and compelling narratives.
- Strong stakeholder management and influencing capability, including influencing senior leaders without formal authority.
- Experience measuring communications effectiveness and impact.
- Demonstrated people leadership, including setting expectations, providing feedback and developing capability.
- Ability to balance strategic thinking with practical delivery and adapt quickly as priorities change.

Position specific:

- Strategic communications strategy and planning
- Audience insight, messaging architecture and narrative development
- Media, issues and reputation management
- Communications governance, decision rights and quality assurance
- Influence without authority and senior stakeholder advice
- Coaching, capability building and people leadership
- Integrated planning and delivery discipline
- Measurement, evaluation and evidence-based improvement

Acknowledgement

This position description serves to illustrate the scope and responsibilities of the position and is not intended to be an exhaustive list of all tasks and duties. You will be required to perform other job-related tasks as requested and as necessitated by the development of this role and the organisation. This position description may also be modified and updated from time to time to reflect these changes.

I certify that I have read, understood and accept the duties, responsibilities and obligations of my position.

_____	_____
Employee	Date
_____	_____
Manager	Date