# Product Owner Lead – Digital Infrastructure
## Digital Infrastructure

| Team: | Digital Infrastructure | Location: | AKL/WLG/CHCH |
|---|---|---|---|
| Reports to: | General Manager - Digital | | |
| Role Type: | Permanent | | |

## About Us

**KiwiRail's Role in Aotearoa, New Zealand**

KiwiRail, a proud State-Owned Enterprise, delivers sustainable and inclusive growth for our customers, communities, and people.

For more than 150 years, rail in New Zealand has connected communities, delivered freight and passengers around the country, and showcased our spectacular scenery to the world. Our purpose—Hononga Whaikaha, Oranga mo Aotearoa (Stronger Connections, Better New Zealand)—speaks to connection with our customers and the future needs of their businesses, connection with the communities we serve and operate in, and connection with each other. KiwiRail is carrying this legacy into the future, delivering connected rail and shipping transport services that create economic, social, and environmental value for New Zealand and New Zealanders.

**Our Workplace**

At KiwiRail, our values define the behaviour we expect from everyone. We have a team of over 4500 people, and every connection we make with each other, our union partners, our customers and all our stakeholders must be of the highest standard.

**Safety, health, and well-being are our number one priority, ensuring our people return home safe and healthy every day.**

## About the Role

### Purpose of the role

KiwiRail is in a phase of significant transformation to modernise and grow our rail and Interislander ferry services in Aotearoa.

The infrastructure team maintain the rail network. Carrying out day to day activities across the country to keep our network smoothly running for freight customers and rail passengers.

This role is part of KiwiRail's Digital Infrastructure team, which focuses on enabling increases in productivity, improvements in safety, value for money spending and new ways of working by leveraging innovative technology.

As Product Owner Lead, you will provide direction and leadership across multiple product lines, overseeing a team of Product Owners within the Digital Infrastructure team, while championing product excellence throughout the organization. You'll be responsible for shaping the overall product approach within the infrastructure business, ensuring alignment across product teams, and driving the successful delivery of the infrastructure digital product portfolio. This role requires you to balance hands-on product leadership with people management, mentoring your team of Product Owners while maintaining strong relationships with senior stakeholders and executives.

Your focus will be on optimizing team performance, establishing consistent product management practices, and ensuring our products deliver meaningful value to customers while meeting business objectives. Success in this role requires vision, strong leadership capabilities, and the ability to navigate complex organizational dynamics while fostering a culture of innovation and continuous improvement.

### Key Accountabilities

Within the area of responsibility, this role is required to:

- Lead and develop a team of product owners through coaching, mentorship, and career development, ensuring consistent delivery excellence while fostering a collaborative and innovative product culture across multiple workstreams.
- Define and execute the overarching infrastructure product strategy and vision, aligning multiple product streams with business objectives while ensuring coherent integration across the product portfolio and maintaining clear prioritization frameworks.
- Establish and maintain product management best practices, processes, and methodologies across teams, including standardized approaches to backlog management, story writing, and product metrics tracking.
- Build and maintain strong relationships with senior stakeholders, effectively communicating product strategy, progress, and outcomes while managing expectations and securing buy-in for major initiatives.
- Drive data-driven decision making across product teams by establishing meaningful KPIs, monitoring product performance metrics, and ensuring insights are effectively used to inform product direction.
- Manage resource allocation and capacity planning across the product team, working with the product owners and stakeholders to optimize resources and ensure efficient delivery of product initiatives.
- Contributing to KiwiRail's broader product management community of practice, notably working in collaboration with ICT to uplift KiwiRail's maturity in product management.

### Key challenges

- Balancing leadership responsibilities with hands-on product management. Needing to stay close enough to product details to guide decisions effectively while not micromanaging product owners or losing sight of broader strategic objectives.
- Managing diverse and sometimes competing priorities across multiple product lines, while ensuring resources are optimally allocated and teams remain aligned with overarching business goals.

- Building and maintaining high-performing product team in a complex environment - this includes developing Product Owners with varying experience levels, managing stakeholder relationships at multiple levels, and fostering collaboration across organizational boundaries.

| Key Relationships<br>Here are the key relationships relevant to this role | | Manage /Lead | Deliver to | Collaborate with | Advise or inform |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Internal | ICT Teams | | | ✓ | |
| | Infrastructure Teams | | ✓ | ✓ | |
| | Digital Infrastructure team | | | ✓ | |
| | Other KiwiRail Business Units | | ✓ | ✓ | |
| External | Consultants, contractors and suppliers | | | ✓ | |
| | External development teams | | | ✓ | |
| | Infrastructure Supply Chain | | | ✓ | |
| | External Training Providers | | | ✓ | |

## What you will do to contribute

| | |
|---|---|
| **Health Safety and Wellbeing** | • Implement safety procedures and ensure team compliance<br>• Analyse workplace risks and develop mitigation strategies<br>• Promote a culture of safety and wellbeing within your team<br>• Respond effectively to safety incidents and near-misses<br>• Support team members' physical and mental health |
| **Customer Focus** | • Foster customer-centric solutions that enhance business outcomes and operational efficiencies.<br>• Provide accessible and effective training for infrastructure teams and supply chain members<br>• Promote collaboration with stakeholders to achieve customer-led strategies<br>• Support a customer-focused culture at KiwiRail<br>• Develop solutions to meet customer requirements<br>• Work with colleagues to improve customer outcomes |
| **High Performing Teams Skills** | • Set clear performance standards aligned with KiwiRail's goal<br>• Build a supportive and cooperative team environment<br>• Build and lead a cohesive, high-performing product team.<br>• Support team development through training and mentorship.<br>• Foster a culture of collaboration and shared accountability for delivering business outcomes.<br>• Provide timely and constructive feedback<br>• Actively seek diverse perspectives in problem-solving<br>• Identify opportunities for coaching and mentoring |
| **Commercial Acumen** | • Develop and deliver product management solutions that demonstrate measurable value to the business.<br>• Identify opportunities to improve efficiency and reduce costs through innovative digital practices.<br>• Ensure roadmaps align with KiwiRail's strategic priorities and commercial objectives.<br>• Plan and monitor resource allocation to achieve team objectives<br>• Consider financial implications when making recommendations<br>• Understand and comply with procurement guidelines<br>• Work with suppliers to ensure quality outcomes<br>• Recognise how financial decisions impact KiwiRail's overall position |
| **Innovation** | • Identify and implement cutting-edge practices to enhance KiwiRail's infrastructure business<br>• Drive a culture of continual improvement across the organisation. |
| **Leadership** | • Be a leader in the adoption of product management practices to enhance KiwiRail's capabilities.<br>• Provide leadership that promotes a work environment that supports innovation, initiative, ownership of problems, personal accountability, and |

engagement with KiwiRail's values to ensure the culture is fostered and neutered to support the wellbeing of all members of the team.

- Manage staff performance in a way that provides staff with clear understanding, guidance and performance criteria around personal behaviour, the conduct of their role, and compliance with the Code of Conduct Policy as implemented by Kiwirail.
- Ensure the team has clear goals (tangible deliverables) and expectations (values/behaviour) set.
- Plan and establish a consistent, fair, and robust succession, mentoring and development guide to ensure all staff are developed professionally with the appropriate training and are provided opportunities equally.
- Ensure Performance plans and reviews for each team member are undertaken annually with a mid-year review to be supported by quarterly touch-base meetings. Ensuring team members are setting SMART goals and key team and individual objectives are set for each year
- Identify and implement emerging technologies and processes that enhance product delivery.

## Decision Making

The position is accountable for decisions regarding all product objectives and for the provision of advice to project team members and relevant stakeholders on day to day operational decisions.

Key decision-making requirements of the position include:

- Product management and delivery decisions
- Risk management decisions
- Product resourcing, planning and scheduling decisions

| | |
|---|---|
| **Human Resources Delegations** | As per HR Delegation policy |
| **Direct reports** | 2-5 |
| **Finance Delegations** | Level 7: $100,000 Operating \| Capex |
| **Budget (operating and capital)** | TBC |
| **Travel Delegations** | Nil<br>Yes approves national travel |
| **Statutory powers** | Nil |

## Physical demands and the nature of work

This role is administration-based and requires:

- prolonged sitting and high computer usage
- limited walking, standing, twisting, bending (at the waist), crouching (bend knee)
- carrying of laptop and paperwork when alternating between home and office

- limited lifting of up to 7 kg archive boxes

*Your role may include other tasks suited to your level, as your manager directs. This job description shows your current duties. We'll review and update it with you if your responsibilities change.*

## About you

**Knowledge and experience**

- You have a tertiary qualification in software engineering, computer science, business management or a related field.
- You bring 10+ years of experience working with products and agile delivery.
- You have strong written and oral communication skills, with an ability to translate technical requirements into practical solutions.
- You demonstrate effective planning, organisational, and problem-solving skills in complex environments.
- You are skilled in mentoring and developing product teams.

**Ways of working / Work-related qualities**

- You communicate effectively across all levels and are skilled at building relationships.
- You are flexible, proactive, and solutions focused.
- You value diversity and foster an inclusive workplace.
- You thrive in collaborative environments and adapt quickly to changing circumstances.
- You are customer-focused and prioritise delivering high-value outcomes.
- You are a natural problem-solver with strong analytical skills.

**Other Requirements**

- You can pass regular drug and alcohol screenings
- You have a current and valid NZ Driver's Licence
- You are willing to travel to KiwiRail sites as required.

**Qualifications**

You need either:

- You have certifications or qualifications in software engineering, computer science, business management or related disciplines.


CREATING STRONGER CONNECTIONS — KiwiRail