

Briefing pack for Growing Future Farmers

Opportunity: Chief Operating Officer

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Robert—
Walters



The opportunity

As COO at Growing Future Farmers, you'll lead national operations at a pivotal time of growth and evolution. This is a hands-on leadership role where you'll shape systems, build capability in a remote team, and ensure consistent, high-impact training for students across rural New Zealand. You'll play a key part in transitioning GFF from a fast-moving startup to a scalable, sustainable national programme. **If you're driven by purpose, passionate about rural communities, and ready to turn strategy into action, this is your chance to make a lasting impact.**

About Growing Future Farmers

Growing Future Farmers is a purpose-driven charitable trust equipping young New Zealanders with practical, on-farm training to launch careers in agriculture. Partnering with farmers, sponsors, and rural communities, GFF delivers life-changing learning experiences nationwide. As it evolves from a regional startup to a national force, GFF remains committed to student success and the future of Aotearoa's food and fibre sector.

Their mission and values

Growing Future Farmers' mission is to empower young New Zealanders with practical, on-farm training, building skills, confidence, and career pathways while strengthening the future of the food and fibre sector.

Purpose

Growing Future Farmers exists to create real opportunities for young New Zealanders through hands-on training. Their purpose is to equip future farmers with the skills and confidence needed to thrive in agriculture.

Authenticity

Growing Future Farmers champions growth by continuously expanding its reach across regions, enhancing programme delivery, and developing staff and students alike - building a resilient, skilled workforce ready to meet the future demands of agriculture.

Community

Growing Future Farmers values community, partnering with farmers, sponsors, trainers, and rural networks to provide supportive learning environments that connect students to meaningful careers and contribute to the sustainability of New Zealand's rural future.

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Timeline

Please note that this timeline is a rough guideline and could change

Applications close	Deadline for applications to close.	Friday, 15th August
Longlist Interviews	Behavioural based interviews conducted by Robert Walters with candidates assessed by Wendy Paul (GFF CEO) and Robert Walters.	To be completed by Tuesday, 26th August
Shortlist Panel Interviews	Appointment Committee conduct panel interviews with top 3 to 5 candidates	W/C 25th August
Psychometric Assessments	Background checks and psychometric assessments to be completed on candidates progressing to final interview.	W/C 1st September
Final Interviews and Presentation (TBC)	Appointment Committee conduct final interview with 2-3 candidates.	W/C 8th September
New Chief Operating Officer Appointment		TBC Pending notice period.

Contact us



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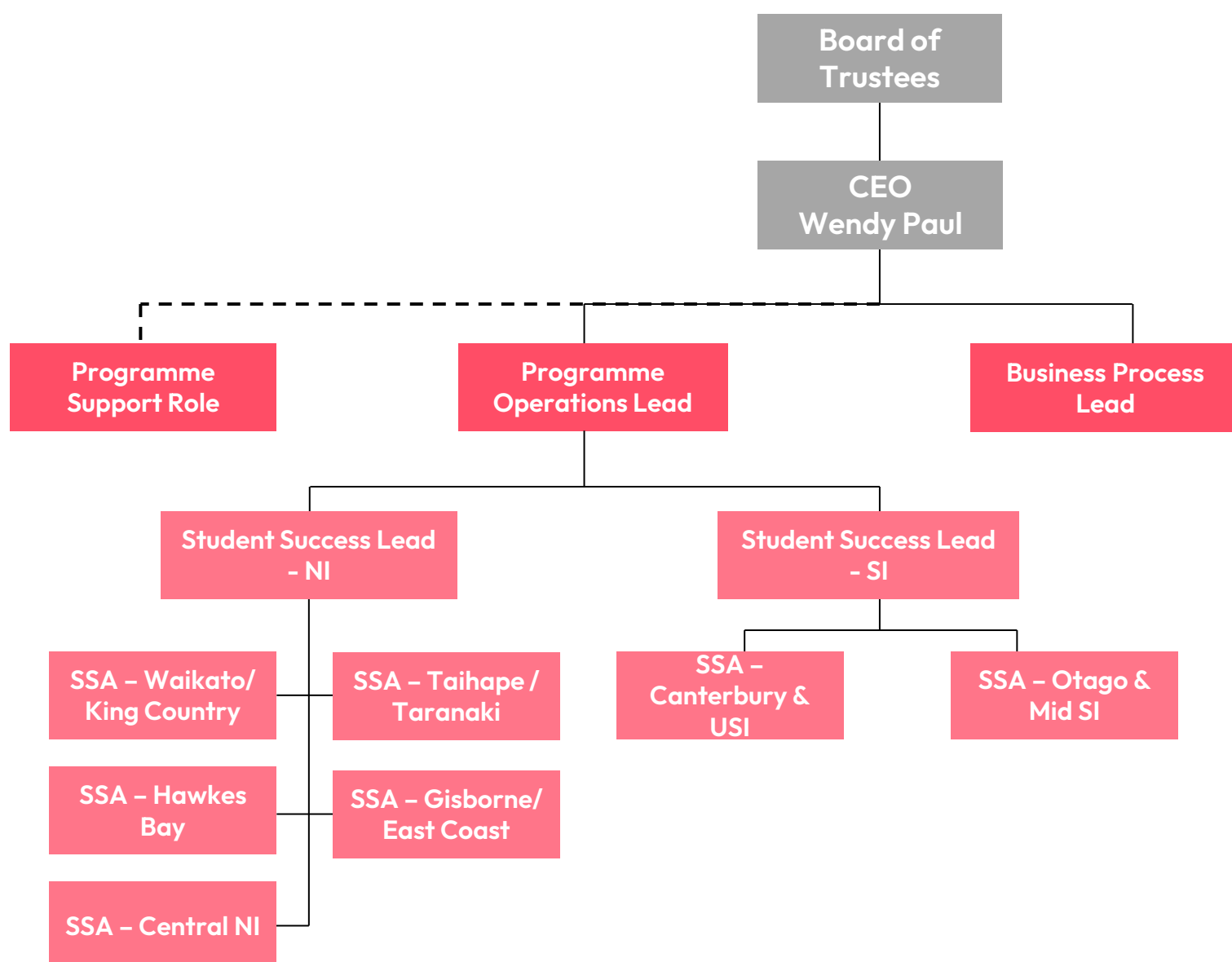


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Organisation Chart

Organisational chart





Job Description

Job Title: Chief Operating Officer

Organisation: Growing Future Farmers (GFF)

Location: Remote (New Zealand-based with regular travel across regions). Auckland or Waikato is preferred

Reporting Line: Chief Executive Officer

Job Specification:

Purpose of the Role:

The Chief Operating Officer (COO) is responsible for managing and overseeing the operational functions of Growing Future Farmers, ensuring the effective implementation of strategic initiatives, and promoting the growth and sustainability of the organisation's vocational training programmes across New Zealand. The COO will bring a strong customer-centric mindset, keeping students, farm trainers, supporters, sponsors, and rural communities at the heart of every decision.

About the organisation:

Growing Future Farmers (GFF) is a purpose-driven charitable trust committed to transforming the lives of young New Zealanders and strengthening the future of New Zealand's Primary sector. GFF do this by delivering practical, on-farm vocational training for young New Zealanders aspiring to build careers in agriculture. Since its inception in 2020, GFF has expanded from 10 students in a single region to over 130 students across 12 regions nationwide. The organisation collaborates closely with farmers, training providers, sponsors, and rural communities to lift standards, develop talent and open pathways into agriculture. As part of its evolution from a small regional start-up to a maturing national organisation, GFF is focused on ensuring the programme remains relevant, forward-thinking, and aligned with the needs of New Zealand's food and fibre sector.

GFF's national team of 12–14 permanent part-time staff is based remotely across the country. Most are focused on student success—providing pastoral care, managing programme delivery, and supporting engagement with Farm Trainers and local communities. A small team supports our operations behind the scenes, spanning systems, communications, finance, and HR.



Key Responsibilities:

1. Strategic Implementation:

- Translate the strategic vision set by the CEO into actionable operational plans.
- Drive the implementation of strategies to achieve organisational goals and fulfil commitments to funders/sponsors
- As required, report and present to the Board

2. Leadership and Team Development:

- Lead and inspire a remote team, fostering a culture of customer centricity, continuous improvement and professional growth.
- Develop team capabilities to ensure effective delivery of programmes.
- Create a culture of care, with a strong emphasis on developing a compelling employee value proposition centred on personal growth and wellbeing,

3. Health, Safety and Wellbeing:

- Ensure a strong culture of health, safety, and wellbeing across all aspects of the GFF programme by promoting best practice on farm and in learning environments, supporting the physical and mental wellbeing of students, farm trainers, and staff, and ensuring compliance with relevant health and safety obligations.

4. Programme Management:

- Oversee the consistent delivery of training programmes across all regions.
- Ensure the quality of meaningful life-changing opportunities and educational experiences for students
- Ensure continuous growth and stickability to the GFF programme, by delivering a strong value proposition for our Farm Trainers, Students and expert trainers, and have strategies and implementation plans that enable regular feedback and learning loops.

5. Engagement and Retention:

- Implement strategies to enhance student and Farm Trainer attraction, engagement and retention.

6. Curriculum and Delivery Enhancement:

- Advocate for and support the development and enhancement of programme delivery and curriculum.

7. Technology and Tools Management:



- Ensure CRM and reporting tools are fit-for-purpose and add value to the organisation.
- Identify opportunities to leverage new technologies and tools to enhance the programme delivery, boost productivity and effectiveness.

8. Operational Planning:

- Lead operational planning, including workforce management, resource allocation and budgeting.
- Develop systems and tools to support effective programme delivery.

9. Managing Risk:

- Identify, assess, and proactively manage operational, reputational and strategic risks to ensure programme delivery is safe, sustainable, and aligned with GFF's goals; while putting in place mitigation plans to address potential challenges.

10. Stakeholder and Community Engagement:

- Build and strengthen relationships with key external partners — from regional training providers and sponsors to farmers and rural community leaders — ensuring GFF's work is collaborative, credible, and connected.
- Champion stakeholder engagement, working closely with regional and national stakeholders to advocate for the GFF purpose.

11. Vendor and Contract Management:

- Lead vendor and contract management, including negotiating service level agreements with key providers and contractors, ensuring services are aligned with organisational needs and deliver value.

Qualifications and Experience:

- **Experience:** Proven experience in an operational leadership role, within the agricultural sector. Proven experience in the education or training sector and startup organisations is desirable.
- **Leadership Skills:** Demonstrated ability to lead and manage remote teams effectively, with the ability to develop growing teams and roll-up your sleeves to get the job done.
- **Education:** A relevant tertiary qualification in business administration, operations management, or a related field is preferred.
- **Communication Skills:** Exceptional communication and interpersonal skills to engage with diverse groups and build strong relationships.



- **Operational Expertise:** Comprehensive understanding of operational systems and continuous improvement processes and health and safety obligations
- **Customer/Stakeholder Experience Mapping:** Ability to capture, analyse, and map the experiences of customers and stakeholders to identify pain points, opportunities, and improvements.
- **Resilience and Emotional Intelligence:** Ability to handle challenges with resilience and maintain focus on long-term objectives.
- **Community Engagement:** Experience or appreciation for grassroots community engagement and professional rigour. Ability to relate to the agriculture sector, building effective relationships.

Key Competencies:

- Strategic Thinking
- Leadership and Team Building
- Problem Solving and Decision Making
- Effective Communication
- Relationship Management
- Adaptability and Flexibility
- Planning and Organising
- Negotiating Skills
- Risk Management

Work Arrangements:

- Remote working, with regular travel required across New Zealand regions to engage with teams, strategic partners, industry representatives and other key stakeholders.
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