

CONSTRUCTION MANAGEMENT

Developed by:



**BUILT
ENVIRONMENT
CAREER
STREAMS**

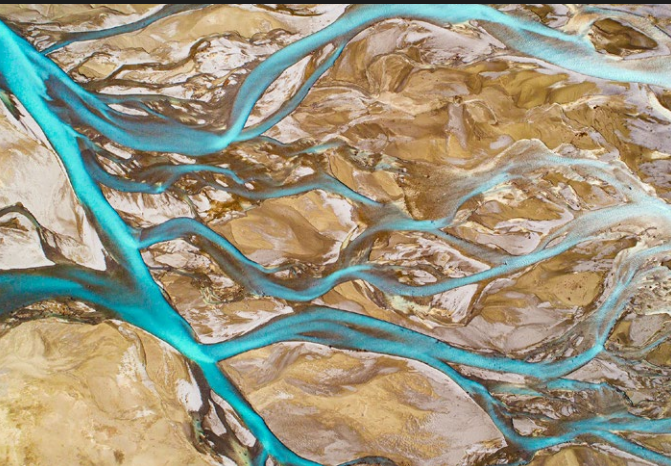
Ngā ara rerekē o te ao
hanga taiao

He ara whiria
A braided river



CHOOSING THE RIGHT CAREER STREAM FOR YOU

Inspired by Aotearoa New Zealand's many braided rivers, this helpful guide has been created for anyone entering or changing careers in the construction industry. Like a river, your chosen career stream may twist and turn throughout your career, but all streams can lead to rewarding and impactful roles – enabling you to make a tangible impact on New Zealand's built environments.



CONSTRUCTION MANAGEMENT

This guide gives you an overview of the opportunities and expectations within construction management – including typical career pathways, key skills required, what the role looks like day-to-day, and how to get started.

Construction management professionals are responsible for coordinating and overseeing all phases of construction projects, ensuring they are delivered on time, within budget, and to required quality standards. These roles are essential throughout the construction lifecycle, including:

- Initial project planning and resource coordination during project establishment
- Site coordination and logistics management during construction phases
- Subcontractor management and trade coordination throughout delivery
- Quality control and health and safety management across all project activities
- Client liaison and stakeholder management, from start to completion
- Programme management and commercial oversight until project handover

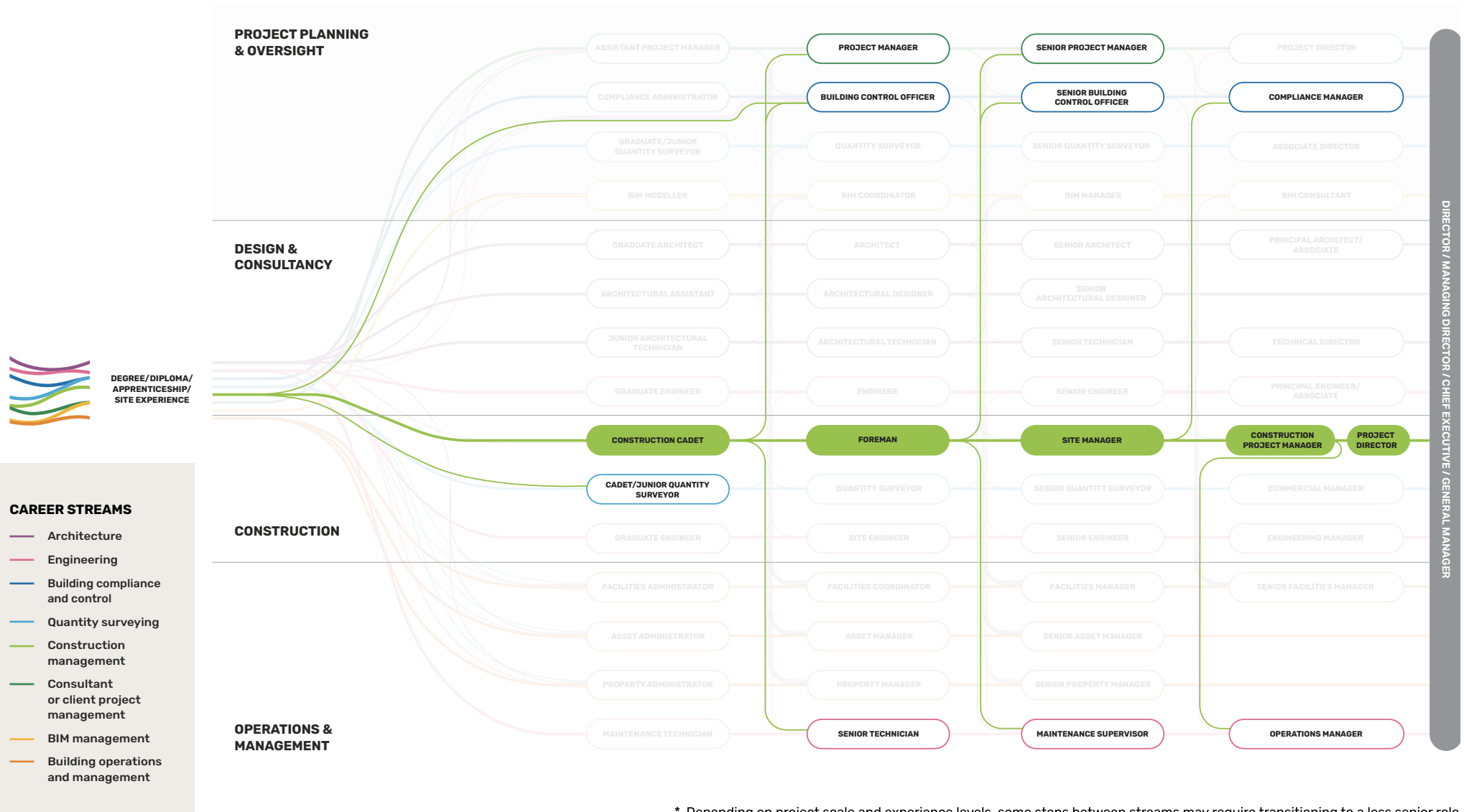
Construction management encompasses progressive levels of responsibility – from hands-on site coordination to strategic organisational leadership:

- **Foremen** manage day-to-day trade coordination and site operations, supervise site teams and ensure work quality and productivity.
- **Site Managers** coordinate overall site activities, manage subcontractors, health and safety compliance, as well as programme delivery, while maintaining direct oversight of construction activities.
- **Project Managers** take broader responsibility for client relationships, commercial management, and multi-project coordination, including ensuring contractual and financial performance.
- **Project Directors** provide strategic oversight of major projects or portfolios, focusing on organisational leadership, business development, and high-level stakeholder relationships, while maintaining ultimate accountability for project and commercial outcomes.

These roles combine leadership skills, technical knowledge, and commercial awareness, offering a rewarding path for those who value hands-on problem-solving, team management, and visible project outcomes. Work in construction management suits individuals who are practical and decisive with strong communication and organisational skills, resilience under pressure, and the ability to manage complex relationships, while delivering tangible results.



CONSTRUCTION MANAGEMENT CAREER STREAM



KEY PARTS OF THE ROLE

- **Leadership and team management** – Construction management roles at all levels involve leading diverse teams including subcontractors, trades, and site staff. You'll be coordinating multiple groups with different priorities and working styles, and your people management skills will become increasingly important as responsibilities advance.
- **Complex stakeholder management** – Navigating relationships is an important part of construction management – including clients, consultants, subcontractors, suppliers, and regulatory bodies. Different stakeholders often have conflicting priorities and expectations, so you'll need to have diplomatic communication and negotiation skills.
- **High-pressure decision making** – Construction projects involve tight deadlines, budget constraints, and safety implications, requiring constant problem-solving and quick decision-making under pressure. You'll need confidence to make sound judgements when different stakeholders have competing interests.
- **Practical problem-solving** – Challenges can arise daily, requiring practical solutions and the ability to adapt to changing conditions. You'll need to think on your feet and find creative solutions to technical and logistical problems.
- **Continuous learning requirements** – Construction methods, technology, and regulations are constantly evolving. It's important to stay current with industry developments, health and safety requirements, and emerging technologies.

ALTERNATIVE CAREER PATHS

After you've gained experience in project management, other roles that become possible include:

- **Specialist site roles** – Construction teams require specialists in a wide range of areas, including: health and safety management, quality management, planning and programming and business development, Building Information Modelling (BIM) coordination, digital project management tools, construction technology integration, and innovative digital methodologies
- **Design management** – Coordinating design teams, managing design interfaces, resolving design conflicts, and overseeing the design-to-construction transition process
- **Client or consultant project management** – Using site management experience and contractor relationships to deliver organisational objectives from the client perspective

- **Project development and feasibility** – Working within development organisations to conduct feasibility analysis, project scoping, and delivery strategy development across property portfolios
- **Asset management and facilities management** – Providing lifecycle planning, maintenance coordination, and portfolio optimisation services for property and infrastructure organisations
- **Specialist subcontracting** – Working within specialist trade areas such as facades, structural steel, mechanical services, or other construction specialisations
- **Education and training** – Teaching or development in tertiary education, corporate training, or professional development roles

SALARY BANDS*

Construction management	Cadet/Junior	Foreman	Site manager	Project manager	Project director
Minimum time in role	2-3 years	3-5 years	4-6 years (destination role)	5-8 years (destination role)	(destination role)
Salary range	\$50,000-\$65,000	\$75,000 - \$100,000	\$100,000 - \$130,000	\$120,000 - \$150,000	\$160,000 - \$210,000

**Salaries and time in roles is indicative only and can vary significantly based on experience, performance, firm size and structure, regional location, specialisation, and market conditions.*

ROLE OVERVIEW

KEY DAILY ACTIVITIES

- **Site coordination and logistics** – Managing deliveries, site access, and resource allocation
- **Subcontractor management** – Coordinating trades, monitoring progress, and resolving issues
- **Programme management** – Tracking project progress against schedules and critical milestones
- **Quality control and inspections** – Ensuring work meets specifications and standards
- **Health and safety management** – Implementing safety procedures and managing site risks
- **Client liaison and reporting** – Communicating progress and managing client expectations
- **Commercial administration** – Managing variations, progress claims, and cost control
- **Problem-solving and troubleshooting** – Resolving technical issues and coordination challenges

WHERE YOU COULD WORK

- **Main contractors** – Large construction companies managing major commercial and infrastructure projects
- **Specialist contractors or subcontractors** – Companies focusing on specific trades or construction sectors
- **Infrastructure companies** – Firms delivering roads, utilities, and public infrastructure
- **Design and build companies** – Integrated organisations providing both design and construction services

WHO YOU'LL WORK WITH

Site teams, subcontractors, trades, suppliers, design consultants, quantity surveyors, clients, property developers, building control officers, health and safety specialists, and equipment operators

TYPICAL WORK ARRANGEMENTS

- A mix of outdoor construction sites and indoor meeting and coordination environments
- Project-based work requires adaptability and commitment to project deadlines
- Early starts, evening and weekend work may be required during critical project phases or weather delays
- Travel is often necessary for projects across different geographic locations
- Roles can be physically demanding, including outdoor work in all weather conditions and extended periods of site activity

WHAT TO EXPECT

REWARDS AND SATISFACTION

- Completed projects remain visible in the community, providing satisfaction and pride in achievement
- Variety and change with different projects, locations, and technical challenges
- Leadership development opportunities managing diverse teams and stakeholders
- Professional recognition and industry respect for successful project delivery



WORK-LIFE BALANCE

- Variable schedule with demanding periods during critical project phases requiring flexibility and commitment
- Early morning starts typically beginning between 6:30-7:00 AM to coordinate daily site activities
- Weekend and evening work may be required during concrete pours, major installations, or project deadlines
- Limited remote working due to site presence requirements and hands-on management needs

GETTING STARTED

Construction management offers multiple entry pathways, depending on your background and career goals. The industry values practical experience as well as formal qualifications, with many successful managers combining trade experience with management development.

IMMEDIATE ACTIONS

- **Gain relevant qualifications** – New Zealand Diploma in Construction, Bachelor of Construction, or equivalent qualifications provide foundational knowledge. Alternative pathways include progression from trades with additional management training
- **Seek practical site experience** – Hands-on site experience is invaluable for understanding construction processes and building credibility with teams. Consider starting in labouring, site administration, or support roles
- **Develop leadership skills** – Focus on people management, communication, and problem-solving skills essential for coordinating diverse teams and managing competing priorities
- **Understand construction processes** – Learn about building methods, materials, and trade sequences to effectively coordinate complex construction activities

HOW TO GET INTO A CONSTRUCTION MANAGEMENT ROLE

- Apply for cadetship programmes with established construction companies offering structured development pathways
- Start with site administration roles and progress to supervision with additional training and experience
- Transition from trades using practical construction knowledge as a foundation for management responsibilities
- Consider graduate programmes combining formal education with practical site experience and mentoring
- International construction experience is highly regarded and can accelerate career progression

ESSENTIAL SKILLS

- Project management methodologies including planning, scheduling, and resource coordination
- Health and safety management with comprehensive understanding of construction risks and compliance requirements
- Construction methodology and sequencing knowledge to effectively coordinate trades and activities
- Communication and stakeholder management skills for managing diverse relationships and expectations
- Commercial understanding including contract administration, cost control, and variation management
- Leadership and team management capabilities for motivating and directing diverse construction teams
- Problem-solving and analytical thinking to address technical challenges and coordination issues
- Quality management and inspection techniques ensuring work meets specifications and standards

“At the site manager level, the job is about understanding the details so you can make sure you get everything done well without any hidden surprises. When you transition to project manager, you have a few more responsibilities... you’ve got to step back and focus on the process and the people, rather than trying to be across everything. It took me a while to figure that out.”

– Lawrence Goudie, National Operations Manager, Brosnan

CAREER STORY



Lawrence Goudie – National Operations Manager, Brosnan

“It’s not about skill sets so much. You can learn how to programme, plan, and do all that stuff if you dedicate time and effort to it, but if you don’t have the right attitude, you won’t succeed.”

Lawrence Goudie’s construction career began with a pre-trade course, followed by an apprenticeship with residential builders in Hamilton and Thames. Overseas experience doing shop fitouts in the UK provided valuable international perspective, before he returned to New Zealand to undertake a degree in construction.

A critical turning point came when he deliberately moved from residential to commercial construction. “I’d been around older builders long enough to know they complain a lot about their bodies breaking down and things like that,” he says. “Manual labour wasn’t something I wanted to do for life.”

Progressing through Mainzeal, Fletcher Construction, and Leighs Construction, Lawrence developed from site supervisor to project manager before becoming National Operations Manager at Brosnan. He strategically built his experience along the way. “I purposely stayed in roles longer than other people might, just to make sure I had comprehensive experience,” he explains. Each transition required new skills, from understanding details as a site manager to managing processes and people as a project manager.

His biggest challenge was transitioning from hands-on site management to strategic oversight. “I think that’s the hardest thing for most project managers who come from a site manager background – that change from being involved in the detail to managing the process.” This evolution required developing new capabilities in business management, while maintaining a connection to practical construction realities.

Lawrence’s advice focuses on mindset over technical skills. “If you don’t have the right attitude, you won’t succeed,” he reinforces. “If you’re not looking to learn and improve, and you’re not keen, you’re wasting your time.” He emphasises that people skills matter most. “You can learn the practical things, but the people side of things is so important – understanding people’s behaviours and drivers.”

His career demonstrates the importance of combining practical experience with formal education, as well as embracing continuous learning, and prioritising people management skills for long-term success in Construction Management.

EMPLOYMENT OPTIONS

EMPLOYER TYPE

Main contractors

- Structured career development with clear progression pathways and comprehensive training programmes
- Team-based environment with specialist support functions and technical expertise
- Performance-based progression with opportunities for advancement based on project success

Specialist contractors/subcontractors

- Focused technical expertise in specific trades or construction sectors providing deep specialist knowledge
- Closer client relationships with more direct involvement in project outcomes and commercial performance
- Potential for entrepreneurial opportunities with greater individual responsibility and decision-making authority

PROJECT VARIATIONS

Large projects

- Higher complexity with multiple experts involved and standardised approaches requiring more sophisticated coordination
- Structured team environments with clearly defined roles and formal processes distributing responsibility across larger groups
- Greater technical responsibility with exposure to complex engineering challenges and advanced construction methods
- Extended project timelines provide sustained learning opportunities but require long-term commitment

Smaller projects

- More individual responsibility with broader skill requirements across all aspects of a project
- Generalist approach handling multiple disciplines, from technical coordination to client management
- Closer team relationships with immediate impact visibility and direct project ownership
- Greater variety in daily activities with faster project turnover providing diverse experience

REGIONAL VARIATIONS

Main centres

- Higher project volumes, more complex developments and structured career paths with comprehensive support systems

Regional areas

- Broader individual responsibility, closer community connections, more varied project types, but potentially limited advancement opportunities

NEXT STEPS AND RESOURCES

BUILDING YOUR PROFESSIONAL NETWORK

Industry connections

- Attend construction industry conferences and management training events
- Join local construction industry associations and professional networking groups
- Participate in employer industry engagement and supplier relationship events
- Build relationships with subcontractors, consultants, and clients in your region

Upskilling and continuing education

- Health and safety management training including Site Safe certification and safety leadership programmes
- Project management methodologies and digital project management tools training
- Leadership and people management development for managing diverse teams and stakeholder relationships
- Commercial management understanding including contract administration and cost control systems
- Construction technology training covering BIM, digital collaboration tools, and emerging construction methods

Industry resources

- Building Institute Aotearoa
buildinginstitute.nz for construction industry networking and professional development
- Health and safety training and certification through Site Safe
sitesafe.org.nz
- Construction Health and Safety New Zealand (CHASNZ)
chasnz.org

MAKING YOUR DECISION

Construction management offers leadership opportunities, tangible project outcomes, and strong career progression potential. When making career decisions, consider your aptitude for team management, interest in hands-on problem-solving and tolerance for irregular hours and physical demands. The field rewards practical thinking, strong communication skills, resilience under pressure, and continuous learning about construction technology and management practices.

Construction management roles suit individuals who enjoy variety, challenge, and the opportunity to lead teams, while delivering significant projects that make lasting contributions to their communities.

This guide draws from research including in-depth interviews with construction professionals across New Zealand, industry surveys, and analysis of career progression patterns. For the complete research report and additional career pathway information, visit buildinginstitute.nz/resource/file/27



IS THIS THE RIGHT CAREER STREAM FOR YOU?

A career in **construction management** is more than just a job. It's a pathway to professional growth, community contribution, and long-term job satisfaction. Whichever career stream you choose, you'll be playing an important role in protecting communities, contributing to high-quality construction, and making a tangible and lasting difference to New Zealand's built environment.



GET THE GUIDE

Use the QR code to download the full Built Environment Career Streams guide and explore the many rewarding pathways in the construction sector.

Or head to the website using this link:
buildinginstitute.nz/resource/file/27