

JOB DESCRIPTION

Job Title:	Chief Technical Officer
Location:	Flexible at any of our main UK Hubs (near Cranfield, Telford or Edinburgh)
Responsible to:	CEO
Job description date/version:	May 2021

ABOUT AGRI-EPI CENTRE LIMITED

Innovate UK established four new agri-tech innovation centres; one of the recommendations of the UK's Agri-Tech Strategy (June 2013). Agri-EPI Centre was selected to receive initial funding of approximately £17.5 million, principally for capital infrastructure, through an open competition run by Innovate UK on behalf of the Department for Business, Innovation and Skills (BEIS). The Centre is now on a journey of growth in its fully operational phase and will operate as part of the network of Agri-Tech Innovation Centres.

We expect to develop a business with a turnover of approximately £8 million per annum within a three-five year period, with an embedded impact capacity, demonstrating value to the UK. This is achievable based on a business model primarily focused around research and development projects, commercial returns on asset portfolio and various other income streams. In the last four years the Centre has established itself in the market, with a significant portfolio of R&D projects active and in pipeline, and as assets are commissioned, income is generated through commercial asset use. In the next five years the business expects to move to increase both grant and commercial income to sustain the business as it grows. It also expects to deliver on wider industry outcomes and impacts.

The CEO and CTO, as part of the Executive Management Team of Agri-EPI Centre, aim to be international leaders in championing the role of Precision Agriculture and Engineering solutions in increasing UK (and international) agri-food productivity and sustainability. They will work with the Centre's Board in raising the national and international profile of UK agri-tech in general and the Centre's own profile. They will be the key 'go-to' people in linking challenges identified from primary production and processing, with technologies (potentially) available; from within our large number of membership companies; identified through horizon scanning; or from appropriate research partners. They will work with relevant groups of partners to secure funding for these projects and support the Centre's own role in running projects. They will seek out all opportunities to use Agri-EPI Centre outputs for the benefit of UK producers and companies, including identifying and developing export markets, and providing oversight on our overseas portfolio.

As well as our key Satellite farm infrastructure across the UK and beyond, the centre will be focused at a number of Hubs throughout the UK:

- The Northern Hub (Edinburgh): staff offices, teaching/demonstration/test areas and lettable space for incubation and food lab and spectroscopy/darkroom test space.

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- The Midlands Hub (Newport, Shropshire): large multi-purpose engineering building and incubation capacity to bring companies together in a ‘neutral space’.
- The Southern Hub (Cranfield): a new research and demonstration facility, building demonstration areas, a meeting room, staff offices, dedicated crop storage facilities, integrated glasshouse and sensor system (shared with a sister Centre) and a laboratory for sensor technology.
- Dairy Engineering Development Centres (Somerset, Shropshire, Dumfries & Galloway): adaptable buildings and automated milking systems needed to develop novel cow-centric approaches to housing and managing both dairy cows and youngstock across a wide range of environments.
- Dedicated aquaculture test and development facilities, at juvenile and older ranges (focused on finfish/salmonids)

The Hubs will provide space for staff offices, formal and informal meetings, as well as excellent IT and video conferencing giving assured links with the other Hubs and satellites. They will have ‘dirty lab’ space for testing prototypes and developing/demonstrating equipment/combinations. They will also incorporate the incubation units.

Agri-EPI Centre will also continue to invest in equipment and IT infrastructure on c25 “satellite” technology sites based on working farms, chosen to provide sector and geographic coverage (including overseas). These satellite farms will provide a completely new industry resource to facilitate detailed analysis of variation around all aspects of the production chain, as well as providing an industry-wide development and evaluation platform for new precision agriculture and engineering technologies. We also intend they are a “springboard” to wider adoption, from successful evaluation.

Our vision for staffing of the Centre is driven by the needs of small/medium companies for flexibility and cost-effectiveness. We continue to run a lean Centre structure, with an efficient mix of technical, administrative and management-focused full-time employees. Our technical capacity is currently increasing, to cover all the commodity sectors and cover the expertise required to provide project and engagement technical support.

Governance

Agri-EPI Centre Ltd. has been established as a Company Limited by Guarantee (CLG), with a mainly independent Board, with Category members as Harbro Limited, AgSpace Agriculture Limited, Kingshay Farming and Conservation Limited, Scotland’s Rural College (SRUC), Cranfield University, Harper Adams University and University of Edinburgh)

The Board Chair, Vince Gillingham is an experienced Director drawn from the precision agriculture sector. Representatives from Innovate UK have observer status at Board meetings.

The Board will work with the Executive Management team to set the strategic priorities for Agri-EPI Centre, and monitor progress against financial and other performance targets.

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Vision

The vision is to transform, and both drive growth and support innovative solutions to help farmers and agri-food businesses become more sustainable and profitable with an ambition to create a globally-competitive leading Centre of Excellence in Precision Agriculture Innovation and Engineering for the UK livestock, arable, aquaculture and horticulture sectors. Agri-EPI Centre will:

- Provide a leadership role to develop advanced agri-tech solutions, aimed at increasing efficiency and sustainability, and contributing to integrated solutions for the challenges identified by the UK and (international) agri-food production industries.
- Support members, partners and wider stakeholders to maximise the impact of AgriTech solutions, increase adoption and commercialisation.
- Foster global competitiveness in such technologies, facilitating substantial benefit to the UK economy in terms of job creation and increased export earnings.
- Provide a focal point for agri-technologies in the UK to link with international collaborators and funding streams and to incorporate technologies and expertise not traditionally associated with agriculture.
- Where appropriate, integrate activities with those of other Agri-Tech Innovation Centres to ensure that developments have impact by, wherever appropriate, being combined with other approaches and technologies/systems.

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DUTIES & KEY RESPONSIBILITIES

Detailed are the duties, person specification and qualifications required for this post. This will be used as the basis for shortlisting. Please use a covering letter, in addition to your CV, to address the list of requirements indicating how your qualifications, experience, skills, and knowledge match the criteria given.

TECHNICAL LEADERSHIP

- Oversee all technical aspects and technological resources of Agri-EPI Centre, for the purpose of organisational growth, and establish a technological vision as well as lead the company's technological development.
- To provide an internationally recognised level of technical excellence in the areas of activity of the Company.
- To have previous senior executive experience, with proven managerial skillset, in a complex delivery environment
- Develop and execute technical strategy and lead technical team to support Agri-EPI's financial and GVA goals.
- Work closely with Agri-EPI's Technical Advisory Committee (TAC), CEO and Board to strengthen Agri-EPI's technical capability
- To support business development team, provide technical expertise to members and partners in developing new ideas, projects and partnerships.
- To support the CEO in engaging directly with Government and industry clients at senior level, on vision, technical and business aspects of the company.
- To contribute to team approaches to project activities, both from within Agri-EPI Centre and across collaborative consortia.
- To lead the project team and support the delivery of projects to meet financial and technical targets.

ADDITIONAL RESPONSIBILITIES

- To directly deputise for the CEO on technical matters when appropriate.
- Via a Key Account Management process, to provide effective liaison with Agri-EPI Centre Industry members and both pursue and build new client relationships.
- To line manage staff, both on appropriate project and technical support functions, as they are allocated or recruited.
- To support both national and internationally related activities as appropriate.

GENERAL DUTIES:

- The post holder is required to apply own judgement to ensure completion of tasks, guided by the framework of policies and procedures and with advice from their line manager.
- To ensure the performance of their duties, the job-holder is required to utilise a range of electronic and communication tools and to employ a significant amount of judgement, persuasion and flexibility.

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- The post holder must use their initiative in the conduct of their work and apply sound judgement, at all times, to ensure that they conduct themselves within the framework of Centre policies and procedures.

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PERSON SPECIFICATION

Competencies	Essential	Desirable
Education/ Qualifications	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Educated to at least degree level in an appropriate technical/engineering/agricultural science subject or similar. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Master Degree/PhD in a related subject area.
Skills/Abilities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Full and knowledgeable technical understanding of the agri-tech/precision agriculture sector. - Demonstrable skills and experience of agri-tech product, tool or process development. - Ability to engage with academic sector on research and development activities and initiatives. - Demonstrable sales and commercial-related track record. - Ability to communicate effectively at both senior management level (internally and externally) and in outreach activities to the sector representatives or general public. - Technical understanding of data and database management and gathering /hardware infrastructure. - Demonstrable ability to develop working relationships and networks across disciplines, organisations and grades. - Ability to manage teams effectively, both in line and across functions. - Well-developed skills across Microsoft Office applications. 	
Experience	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Recognised track record in senior leadership function - Proven track record of leading high-performance teams to achieve targets, driving organisational change, including mentoring and coaching skills. - Translating complex science and technological solutions into commercial products and services in agriculture industry. - Project management and delivery 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Track record of lead/senior organisational technical role. - Experience of multi-partner organisations and multi-way liaison with a range of stakeholders.

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	<p>experience.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">- Experience of post-graduate academic research as is an understanding of the process and culture of academic research.	
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Knowledge	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Technical knowledge of measurement systems and instruments in precision agriculture. - Excellent working knowledge of Excel, Word and Outlook - Understanding of data gathering and database systems. 	
Other Requirements	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Ability to deliver under own initiative and when teamed with others. - Able to work as part of a busy team. 	

BRIEF STATEMENT OF TERMS AND CONDITIONS OF EMPLOYMENT

EMPLOYER Agri-EPI Centre Limited, XX

GRADE AND SALARY The appointment will be within the scale: £XX per annum. Any cost of living increases are normally awarded annually. Additional discretionary bonus provision is applied, based on performance.

CONTRACT TYPE Permanent, but subject to main sponsor (Innovate UK) grant funding continuation.

LOCATION One of our UK Main Hubs.

HOURS OF WORK Normal working week of five days (Monday to Friday) 37 hours (excluding lunch breaks).
 Staff may be expected to attend occasional evening and weekend meetings/events. Reasonable notice will be given and the post holder may take compensatory time off in lieu (known as TOIL) as agreed with their line manager.

HOLIDAYS Annual entitlement of 25 days and public holidays.

PROBATION All appointments are subject to a probationary period of 6 months after the start date to formally assess suitability for the post and to assess training needs. Regular meetings will be held during the probationary period to discuss and evaluate progress during this period.