

CODC cadetships - a career pathfinder

You might be a school leaver, or left university, or already be in work, but not quite sure what to do next.

Whatever your situation is, sometimes you just need a little help to kickstart your career.

That's what the two-year Central Otago District Council cadetship is all about, while supporting young people in our community.

It is designed as a launching pad and it has given our current cadets, Emma van der Westhuizen and Jocelyn Ryan a number of skills and enhanced personal strengths they didn't know they had.

Meet Jocelyn and Emma.



What were you doing before you became a cadet?

E: I moved to New Zealand in 2022 where I completed my last year in school at Cromwell College while working casually in hospitality.

I wasn't too sure what I wanted to do after school and the cadetship seemed like a good middle ground between going off to uni and working full time.

J: For me, it was about trying something new.

What were your expectations before you started?

E: I had no previous experience with Local Government, so I had no real expectations going into it. The experiences and insight I have gained throughout the cadetship have definitely exceeded any expectations.

J: Me neither. I came in with an open mind, ready to try new things, and to find a new career path.

Was working at Council anything like you thought it would be?

J: I didn't expect as many people to be working at Council – it's a big place, with a lot of different things going on, which really surprised me. Even though it's serious stuff, there have been fun aspects to the whole experience.

E: There are serious moments as with any job, and I would agree, it can also be quite a lot of fun. The teams that I have worked with have been great and welcoming. There are so many people with all kinds of backgrounds to learn from.

What did you want to get out of the experience?

E: I wanted to gain experience without being tied to one position, while getting to see and trial a few different potential career paths.

J: For me it was to try a potential career path, and I discovered new strengths and interests e.g., digital data bases.

What have been some of the highlights for you?

J: There have been so many! The opportunity to do the cemetery digitisation project was the highlight and such a fascinating project, and so important for the community. I digitised the records for four Central Otago cemeteries, and that was a truly amazing, fulfilling experience. This has been my main focus, and I'm really proud of it. I learned a lot about history, systems and people.

E: Being a part of the project team for the District Vision project, *Shaping Tomorrow Together*, which took me all over the district, meeting the most interesting people and seeing the most amazing landscapes within Central. I enjoyed working with stakeholders and hearing what the community thinks about the place they live in. The other highlight was being involved with getting all the libraries in our district RFID (wireless Radio Frequency Identification) tagged. I've spent most of my time in the People and Culture area – HR and Health, Safety and Wellbeing, which has also been a huge learning experience.

What's next for you?

E: Looking at a move to Auckland to pursue some opportunities.

J: Waiting to see what the world has for me.

Has it helped put you on a pathway to a career?

E: Yes, definitely. I have learned so much over my two years as a Cadet and have been able to gain invaluable firsthand experience across multiple sectors.

J: It has definitely given me several good possible career paths.

CODC People and Culture General Manager Louise Fleck said:

"We've loved seeing them grow in confidence and skills, and they've had invaluable input into various projects during their time with us. Jocelyn and Emma are valuable members of the team at Council – two super-talented young women.

"As we said, the cadetships are designed as a launching pad to a career or job. We'd love to see them come back, as was the case with former cadet Morgan Potter."

Morgan was a school leaver from Dunstan High and working as a barista and waitress in Alexandra when she decided to become a cadet.



What made you decide to give a cadetship a go?

It seemed like an amazing opportunity to 'try out' a range of different jobs and careers to see what I was interested in pursuing. At the time of finishing high school, I knew what subjects I found interesting and which ones I was excelling at, however I had no idea how to translate that to a career path, and didn't want to go to uni, just because it was 'the thing to do' when I wasn't sure what I wanted to study.

What were your expectations before you started?

I had the idea to go for this cadetship to give myself a couple years to figure out what career path might be right for me, and save lots of cash while doing it. I figured if all else fails I would have saved up more than enough to go on a big OE after finishing the cadetship, and then I could really go and travel without being strapped for cash. Little did I know, the cadetship was probably the best decision I could have made and has opened up so many doors for me that I had no idea existed! I had barely any knowledge of what Council did before I started, so just decided to go for it and learn as much as I could. I was very excited!

Was working at Council anything like you thought it would be?

I didn't really have any preconceived ideas, but pretty quickly I realised how lucky I was to have this opportunity. I thoroughly enjoyed the switch from minimum wage café jobs to working on meaningful projects and using my creative skills in an office environment. I've had experiences and mentoring you just couldn't get from another job; they really help you to excel with a huge amount of support while beginning your career journey.

What did you want to get out of the experience?

A sense of the direction I wanted to take for my career. I didn't just get this – I was provided the opportunity to actually begin my career (and one that I was passionate about!). I have realised how lucky I am, as I know some of my friends who have now finished university are now really struggling with finding a job in their chosen field due to many employers requiring prior experience.

What have been some of the highlights for you?

Meeting so many incredible people who helped me through my journey.

Winning the Rising Star award at the employee awards at the end of my cadetship, winning the Rising Star Award for YoungTEC (Young Tourism Export Council) and accepting the award in front of hundreds of tourism industry professionals at the Tourism Export Council conference in Rotorua 2023, being selected as one of six young tourism professionals out of New Zealand to go on the North Asia Centre of Asia Pacific Excellence (NA CAPE) Japan Study Tour in March 2024.

What sort of projects did you work on?

A huge range of projects, every department it was different. My favourite department was Communications where I worked on video projects, websites, graphic design projects, social media content, emergency management, media releases, engagement events and more.

What sort of career path did it take you on?

When my two-year cadetship was coming to an end, I was offered a full-time role in the communications team, and I was excited to stay on in my first professional job outside of the cadetship. I began feeling the need to travel and experience a city lifestyle as I never got the opportunity to go on that OE I had originally wanted to do, so I saw a job come up for the Christchurch City Council in their social media team. I applied for it and secured the role out of over 100 other applicants... which showed me just how valuable my experience at CODC was! I then went to Christchurch and worked there for a bit before deciding ultimately that Central Otago was where I belonged. An opportunity presented itself in the Tourism team in marketing and I promptly returned home to begin my career in marketing. I then decided Digital Marketing was the perfect fit for me and wanted to gain a formal qualification and up my skills in this area. Not long after, a Digital marketing role came available within the Tourism team and I applied and secured this role in early 2023, which is where I am today. I am one year into completing my two-year part-time Level 7 Diploma of Digital Marketing (Applied), with the support of CODC.

What opportunities did your cadetship open up for you?

Having the experience that I have now means that I am very employable at any council or RTO (Regional Tourism Organisation) all around the country. Council has also provided me the opportunity to study while working, and I don't have to pay for any study or study-related costs.

Interested in applying for a cadetship?

We are seeking two cadets for to start a two-year learning journey. These roles will give you exposure to the different departments that the Council has operating, plus develop life skills that are transferrable and applicable to many employment opportunities.

What's in It for You?

- **Earn While You Learn:** Get paid as you gain valuable work experience and develop new skills.
- **Practical Experience:** Dive into real-world projects across various departments. Gain valuable insights into local government operations and community service.
- **Mentorship:** Learn from seasoned professionals who are eager to share their knowledge and help you grow.
- **Skill Development:** Enhance your skills in project management, communication, problem-solving, and more.
- **Community Impact:** Help make a difference in your community by contributing to meaningful projects and initiatives at CODC.

We would love for you to submit a CV and cover letter telling us a bit about yourself, what your interests are and why you would like to work for Council.

We are a forward-thinking organisation with a vision for the future – this is an excellent opportunity to grow your career and earn at the same time.

Applications close 1 September and roles start January 2025

For more information and to apply go to:

<https://codc.elmotalent.co.nz/careers/codc/job/view/155>