

# Changing the story on arts, culture, and creativity in Aotearoa



## *A guide for arts advocates*

How to build support for a future where artists and  
creativity thrive, so all New Zealanders flourish



**If you believe arts,  
culture, and creativity are  
central to a thriving Aotearoa,  
this guide is for you.**

**This guide offers advice to support a shared  
approach to advocating for change**

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This guide is designed to help:

- build public narratives that celebrate and support the role arts, culture, and creativity play in our lives
- communicate what changes our sector and communities need to flourish.

Creative New Zealand Toi Aotearoa is committed to empowering the arts, culture, and creative sector with tools to strengthen our collective voice.

This guide is one of those tools. It provides a framework and an approach to advocacy to build toward long-term change.

This guide offers evidence-based insights into the most effective ways to talk about the changes we want to see and traps to avoid. It's designed to be used collectively — to strengthen, complement, and support the important work many in the sector are already doing.

We encourage you to use the guide — and the checklist provided — to inform and test your advocacy communication.

The guide has been researched and written by narrative change strategists, The Workshop. We thank The Workshop team for sharing their expertise, listening to the unique needs of our community, and providing a framework to help make our voices heard.

Importantly, this guide has been developed with significant input from our sector including The Arts Foundation Te Tumu Toi, Te Taumata Toi-a-Iwi, Toi o Taraika Arts Wellington, and deep dives with Māori and Pacific knowledge holders.

To everyone who has fed into this work, and the group of sector leaders who reviewed and tested the guide — ngā mihi nui ki a koutou.

**Creative New Zealand Toi Aotearoa and Te Rōpū Mana Toi, 2022**

**“Evidence needs  
compelling stories.  
Compelling stories  
need new language that  
moves people to act.”**

Linda Tuhiwai Smith CNZM, Distinguished Professor,  
Te Whare Wānanga o Awanuiārangi<sup>1</sup>



### **Get in touch, or join our community of practice**

As a next step, we'll be working with The Workshop to support a community of advocates to bring this advice to life. If you're interested in joining us as we work together to build support for a future where artists and creativity thrive, so that all New Zealanders flourish, we'd love to hear from you.

This work will have the greatest impact if we do it together, consistently. We invite you to join us — we are stronger together.

We also invite you, as readers, to get in touch if you have feedback or suggestions on the information in this guide.

Contact us at [advocacy@creativenz.govt.nz](mailto:advocacy@creativenz.govt.nz)

### **Thank you**

Thank you to Creative New Zealand staff, sector advisory group Te Rōpū Mana Toi — Dolina Wehipeihana, Elise Sterback, Gretchen La Roche, Dr. Jeremy Mayall, Karl Chitham, Kim Morton, Megan Peacock-Coyle, Fonoti Pati Umaga, Rosabel Tan, Tānemahuta Gray — Tanea Heke, Dr. Lana Lopesi, The Arts Foundation Te Tumu Toi, Te Taumata Toi-a-Iwi, Toi o Taraika Arts Wellington, other knowledge holders, user testers, and everyone else who has helped shape and review this guide.

### **A note about the term 'arts, culture, and creativity'**

We've used the term 'arts, culture, and creativity' to talk in a consistent way about the sector in this guide. We've done this because research shows that talking about 'the arts' or 'arts and culture' brings to mind a more narrow and elite understanding of arts, culture, and creativity.<sup>2</sup> In Aotearoa, many advocates will also use the term ngā toi Māori. The recommendation, '[Use compelling language](#)' has more information about this and suggests other phrases you could experiment with.

# About this guide

This guide offers advice on how to build support for a future where artists and creativity thrive, so all New Zealanders flourish. It introduces ways of talking to help build a story so people understand and support the changes that will make the biggest difference to the arts, culture, and creative sector.

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## Changing mindsets together to realise a shared vision

*Imagine an arts sector that feels electrified: with leaders that make our jaws drop; with artists that sear themselves into our flesh; with work that completely rewires how we see the world, that makes our hearts pound so hard it hurts. Imagine a sector where our artists choose to stay here because there's nowhere else they'd rather be. A place where others try to tour, to build relationships, to learn. As we stand at this precipice, let's choose to stand tall and proud, and as we start to plant these first seeds, let's choose to lead the way.*

**Rosabel Tan, writer, strategist and producer<sup>3</sup>**

**[Read the article this quote appears in on the Te Taumata Toi-a-Iwi website](#)**

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To achieve an electrifying vision like this together, we need to shift dominant mindsets that act as a barrier to changes that would make this world possible.

As advocates, we might think about these changes as policy settings, law changes, systems change, or upstream change. Our audiences might understand them as changes that make the biggest difference to people's lives.

These changes include embedding the value of arts, culture, and creativity in everyday life, viable careers for artists, long-term sustainable investment, and equity of access. It means things like giving artists more money and spaces to create. It might mean bringing labour protection of artists and cultural professionals into line with the general workforce, or a base income for artists, or better

pension and sick pay for freelancers. It means having Māori, Pacific, Asian, Deaf and disabled people, LGBTQIA+ people, and other communities making decisions to ensure the arts are more accessible, relevant, valued, and protected.

**[Read more about systems change in section three](#)**

Some persistent, dominant ways of thinking that we read about in the media or hear in conversations act as barriers to a greater understanding of and support for the whole sector. To shift these mindsets, we need to use new narratives and a consistent approach to communicating with each other and with our audiences. You'll also have specific things that you're trying to build support for and you can use the advice here to create your own stories using helpful narratives.

## **A communication framework to build a story about the changes you're working towards**

If you're a current or aspiring advocate in the arts, culture, and creative sector, and you have a vision for a brighter future for the sector, this advice is for you. It introduces ways of talking to help audiences understand and support the need for those changes the sector needs to thrive. The advice is for established arts advocates, arts advocacy collectives, new independent advocates, and artists and creatives wanting change.

Every piece of advocacy has its own nuances,

audiences, cultures, history and objectives. Use the advice in this document to scaffold your own communications for your needs.

This advice doesn't give you specific, detailed messages for every piece of advocacy. The narrative advice here is offered as a broader framework of ways of talking about arts, culture, and creativity. When everyone uses a similar approach and broad narratives, across their different specific campaigns and communication, those stories come together and a much bigger shift can happen. Over time, we can build a new, widely understood story about the value of arts, culture, and creativity in Aotearoa.

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## **How we've structured this document**



### **Section 1: Practical recommendations and examples**

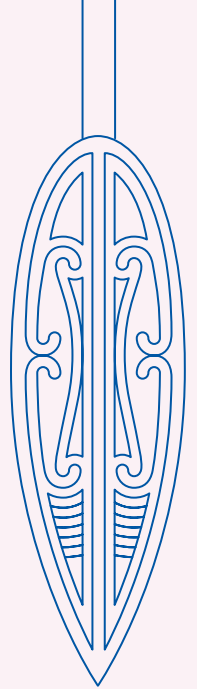
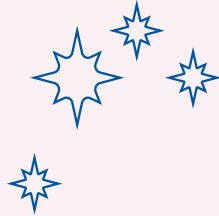


### **Section 2: What research was done and the insights from it**



### **Section 3: The theory and science behind the recommendations**

We've also written a short summary as a separate document  
[Read the summary guide on the Creative New Zealand website<sup>4</sup>](#)



## Specific reflections from ngā toi Māori and Pacific arts advocates

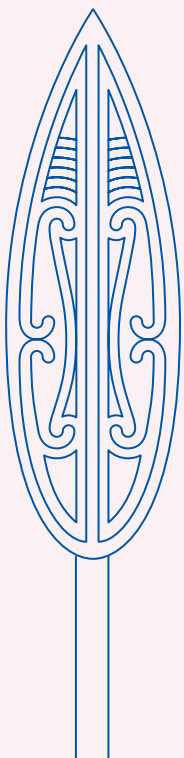
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**When we did the research to inform this advice, our team of tangata whenua and tangata tiriti contributors understood that Māori and Pacific artists and advocates have specific stories to tell about the importance of the arts and creative practice to their communities.<sup>5</sup>**

The research included interviews with knowledge holders and story sessions with respected advocates for tangata whenua and tangata moana artists and art forms. These interviews helped us better understand some of the specific visions, barriers, aspirations, and solutions that will support Māori and Pacific artists to flourish. We've included reflections from these interviews throughout this guide.

We hope this advice supports and complements the work of ngā toi Māori and Pacific arts advocates who are already leading narrative work, and reflects some of the ongoing discussions shared with us during this project.

You will see reflections, which look like this page, repeated throughout the guide.





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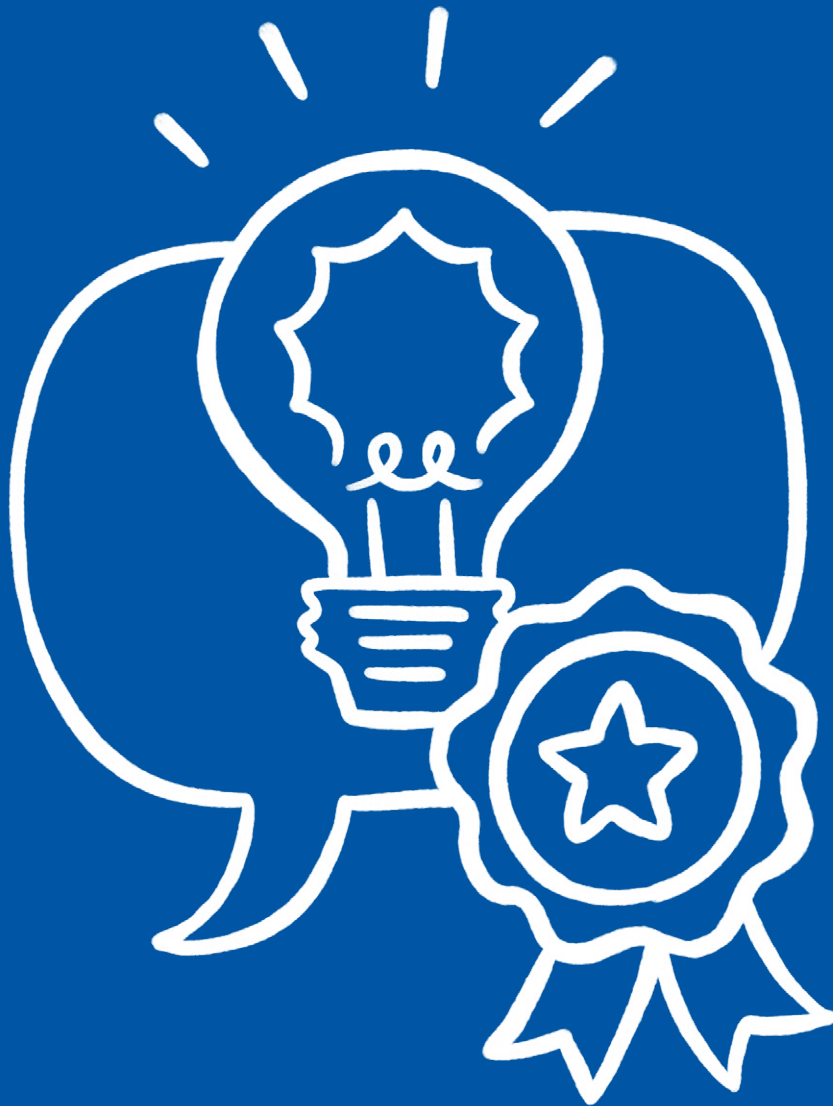
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# Section 1

## Practical recommendations and examples





## **This section gives practical recommendations and examples for communicating about the arts, culture, and creative sector**

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The aim of communicating in this way is to help more people understand and support changes the sector needs to thrive. The advice is based on research, conversations, and the theory and science of narrative change.

Use these recommendations to check your own communications — keep doing what works, reduce what might be unhelpful, and try some new techniques.

### **These recommendations focus on persuadable audiences**

To build support for change, focus on communicating with audiences who are 'persuadable' or 'fence-sitters'. These people are the majority and, once persuaded, can support meaningful change.

Your base of supporters might still need to be persuaded of some things. For example, they already value arts, culture, and creativity, but might not yet see the need for those big changes at the political level that the sector needs.

Some audiences who seem unsupportive might hold their views because they've been exposed to unhelpful narratives. They could shift to support necessary change when we give them better explanations and solutions.

For opponents with tightly-held or entrenched views, the best advice is to not focus your attention here. Trying to engage with or negate these views can make them louder and get in the way of your own narratives or story.

### **Adapt the examples and advice in this guide for your needs**

We've included examples from Aotearoa and overseas to show different aspects of the advice in action. No example can do everything perfectly. This work takes time and repetition. Use the advice to shape your overall approach, and choose two or three priorities to use in your own work for your own audiences and needs.

# How to help people understand and support change

Here's how to deepen understanding and build support for a flourishing and accessible arts, culture, and creative sector. The rest of this section expands on each recommendation and gives examples. This advice is aimed at persuadable audiences.

1

## Replace unhelpful narratives with helpful narratives

Narratives are patterns of stories, words, and pictures. Helpful narratives can help shift mindsets to create support for the changes that make the biggest difference to arts, culture, and creativity.

2

## Use a vision + explanation + solution formula

Give people a clear vision, an explanation of the barriers standing in the way, and lay out the solutions to realising the vision. Using this formula gives people hope that change is achievable and shows what needs to happen.

3

## Tap into what people value

Engage with people's deeply held values to motivate support for change. The way we word our communication can bring the most helpful values, like equity, care, and connection to the surface.

4

## Explain the connection between the arts, culture, and creativity that people value and what's needed to support artists and the sector

Name what's needed to support artists and the sector whenever you talk about the value of arts, culture, and creativity — it's not easy for people to see what causes under-resourcing and what changes are needed for the sector to flourish.

5

### **Emphasise strengths rather than struggles**

Highlight the strengths and assets of artists, communities, and the sector. It's understandable to want to start with problems and struggles, but doing this can make persuadable people feel hopeless and won't persuade them to support the changes needed for artists to thrive.

6

### **Continue to tell compelling stories about ngā toi Māori**

Keep telling the unique stories of Māori artists. Stories about the impacts arts, culture, and creativity have on hauora and identity, and on whānau and community connectedness can motivate people to act.

7

### **Use the expertise of communities to shift mindsets and narratives together**

Work with cultural knowledge holders, artform specialists, and communities to develop helpful narratives and explanations together. Community connectedness can motivate people to act.

8

### **Focus on artists as people and the systems that support them**

Making artists visible and showing the systems that enable them to create helps people understand that artists need the right systems and support to thrive.

9

### **Use compelling language**

Use more accessible ways to talk about arts, culture, and creativity. Use concrete, specific words, and use metaphors to help explain complex ideas.

10

### **Choose messengers or storytellers your audience trusts**

Choose messengers people already trust. Use a range of messengers — messengers with shared values, messengers who are well qualified to comment on the context of the message, surprising messengers, and intergenerational messengers.

1

## Replace unhelpful narratives with helpful narratives



## Narratives are patterns of stories, words, and pictures

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Narratives help us make sense of the world and often reflect our shared ways of thinking and believing — our mindsets.

Helpful narratives can help shift mindsets to create support for the changes that make the biggest difference.

Understanding what people are currently thinking and saying can help us. And without repeating or getting drawn into unhelpful narratives, we can replace them with helpful narratives about what it takes for arts, culture, and creativity to thrive.

### **Adapt helpful narratives for your needs**

The tables on the next few pages suggest helpful narratives you can embrace to tap into people's collective values and show the support and changes needed for the sector to thrive.

The tables also list narratives that do no harm but do not actively build support for change, and those harmful, unhelpful narratives used by opponents. We should avoid myth-busting unhelpful narratives because if we do this we repeat the message, which makes it more dominant and that's all that some people hear. Myth-busting also means that our opponent's narrative is framing how we communicate. Use your own narrative to frame the conversation.

### **Embrace and replace new narratives**

When you create your own narratives, try to be as specific as possible about the change or support you're calling for. Adapt the helpful narratives to suit you and your audience's needs.

## Arts, culture, and creativity as a public good



### Embrace helpful narratives

Arts, culture, and creativity is vital infrastructure for healthy, vibrant people and communities. Like other community infrastructure such as transport and schools, arts and culture needs the same support.

Everyone can experience and benefit from the art, culture and creativity that is all around us.

Arts, culture, and creativity is a public good and needs the same funding and support as other essential services.

It's fair that we all can be close to the creativity that we need.

The power of creativity can change lives.

### Reduce neutral narratives



Arts, culture, and creativity are good for our well-being — with no explanation of essential upstream change.

This narrative is true, but if you're advocating for systems or structure changes, it's important to link this narrative with the need for the right systems and structures.

### Replace unhelpful narratives



Arts, culture, and creativity are just a nice-to-have luxury.

Art is an elitist luxury, and all about million-dollar paintings and gallery openings.

## Artists as leaders, innovators, and storytellers

### Embrace helpful narratives

Artists are innovators and have a profound effect on who we are as people in society.

Artists help us all tap into our inherent creativity.

Artists can bring us through difficult times.

Arts, culture, and creativity help tell the stories of Aotearoa. Artists create space for important conversations about our national identity and help strengthen our communities.

Artists are creators of art work — and they are also teachers, mentors, health workers, and in corporate boardrooms.

Artists play a key role in questioning, probing, and re-imagining our world.

The influence of artists and artistic leaders can have a profound effect on people leading fulfilled lives.

As people, we're stronger together and with the right support artists can help connect us.



### Reduce neutral narratives



Artists are struggling and the art they produce is valuable — both these things are true, but leading communication with this doesn't work to get changes that will make the biggest difference.

Art is not a luxury and is essential to our well-being — this is true, but repeats a myth and is not effective to get support for changes that will make the biggest difference.

### Replace unhelpful narratives



Government support for art, culture, and creativity is welfare and fosters dependency.

'My kid could do that' — arts, culture, and creativity is not a specialised skill.

Those woke, liberal artists; it's either us or them.

## Arts, culture, and creativity as valuable work



### Embrace helpful narratives

**We invest together in culture, connection and creativity.**

**Investment in arts, culture, and creativity is an investment in people and in community well-being.**

**Audiences in Aotearoa are hungry for stories and experiences that connect them to each other and the unique creativity of this place.**

### Reduce neutral narratives



Some art and exhibitions earn lots of money.

Arts, culture, and creativity provides financial and economic benefits — this narrative triggers a consumer, capitalist mindset that doesn't build support for changes that will make the biggest difference.

### Replace unhelpful narratives



The arts are a financial investment and need a cost benefit analysis.

If government money goes to the arts, then schools and hospitals will get less — this is called a zero sum narrative.

Art is a product and its value is based on what's produced.

'Good art' will succeed and 'bad art' will be filtered out. Private enterprise will fund art and the free market will prevail.

Talking about the struggling artist or the economic value of art doesn't motivate people to act. Giving facts without an explanation is also ineffective. It's hard to resist doing this because using money to show the value of something is deeply embedded.

## Do more of this

# Use helpful narratives that show what arts, culture, and creativity can do for well-being

Here are some examples

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Read the [article \*Connecting, reflecting and comforting - what arts and culture can do for well-being\* on the Stuff website.](#)<sup>6</sup>



Caren Rangi ONZM, Chair of the Arts Council of New Zealand Toi Aotearoa

**"Art is our core business. It's a public service that cuts across everything we do... it's also essential to the collective social well-being as a community and as a civilisation. It also offers a lot in terms of how we can deal with our environmental challenges and how we communicate with people, and how we get people on board with the broader systemic changes that we need to achieve in order to build a safer climate future for those that come after us."**



Aaron Hawkins, Mayor of Dunedin

**"As a master weaver of my art, I share, teach, sing and tell stories. This heals broken hearts through laughing, crying, debating, sharing time and stories... Weaving has opened up many doors and opportunities for me... Sharing my knowledge has allowed me to make lifelong friends. This artform weaves us together as people and helps us to understand others and their cultures. Weaving is not just about the art itself, but the therapeutic properties of traditional communal activities, which feed our mental, physical and spiritual well-being. Many people are hurting and need healing."**



Misa Emma Kesha QSM, Samoan master weaver

[Read the article this quote appears on, on the Pantograph Punch website](#)<sup>7</sup>



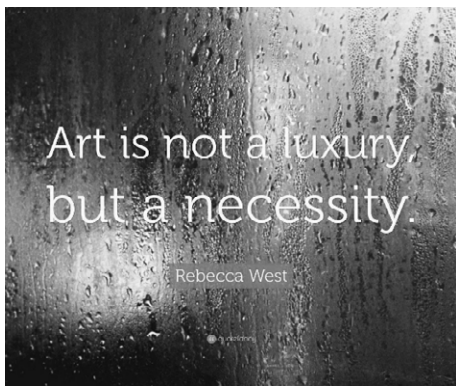


Avoid this

## Don't repeat unhelpful narratives

Here are some examples to avoid

This is an example of negating an unhelpful narrative rather than putting forward your own counter narrative. In this quote, the idea that art is a luxury narrative is being directly rebutted.



This example focuses on the economic and financial benefits of art.



Americans For The Arts



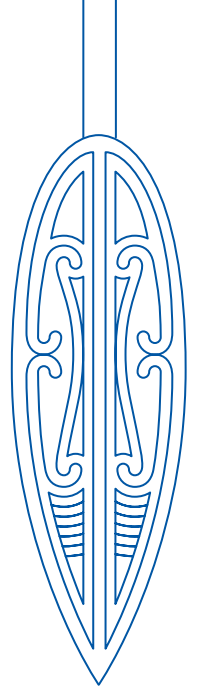
## Use a vision + explanation + solution formula

Persuading people means giving them a clear vision, an explanation of barriers, and a pathway to the vision. Tapping into people's values is also important — see recommendation 3. Using this formula gives people hope that change is achievable and shows what needs to happen.



### A vision names the future to make the future

People need reminding of a better future — a clear description of how the world could be better in specific ways. Describe concrete changes in people's lives, environments and communities. Start with this vision. Repeating your vision often gives people hope and creates a pathway to solutions.



Ngā Toi Māori advocacy reflections

## Visions for the sector and Māori creatives

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Talking about the changes that will make the biggest difference for the sector and Māori creatives begins with a vision. The knowledge holders we talked with spoke often about their hopes and aspirations for the sector and their fellow creatives, in different and more specific ways than the collective vision for the sector as a whole.

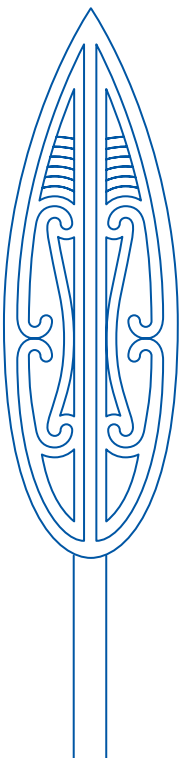
During our conversations, knowledge holders reflected on the importance of rangatahi:

- having their culture reflected and represented in art and creativity
- being supported to participate in art, culture, and creative experiences
- feeling proud of their culture and identity.

One of our knowledge holders, Tanea Heke MNZM, actor, director, and producer, spoke about her hope for all Māori creatives to have their mana and their contributions and skills recognised and celebrated.

*'to stare into infinity with creatives standing on either side of me who are making a sustainable living from their mahi and are able to tell true stories with their culture and their reo at the heart of it, because that's what we do'.<sup>8</sup>*

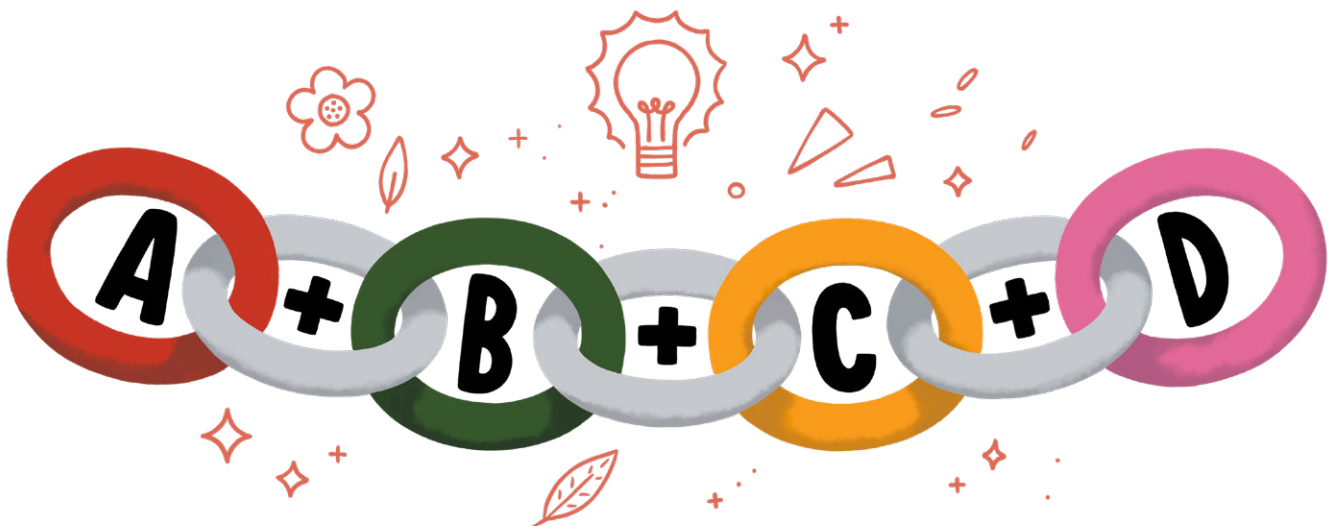
Leading with visions for our communities helps people feel hopeful and that change is possible. Recommendation 6 of this advice outlines how this vision and the specific barriers and solutions we heard can be part of a powerful story to build support for the changes needed for ngā toi Māori to flourish.



## Explain barriers and give solutions in a chain

People make mental models about things in a chain (like a story), so we need to provide a chain that supports our vision. Facts can help explain a problem when we put them in the right order.

Explanatory chains put helpful facts in an order that helps people understand



### An explanatory chain

**A**

Leads with a short vision, a link to values, or an explanation of why it matters.

**B**

Identifies the cause of the issue upfront.

**C**

Gives general direct and indirect impacts of the issue, with facts.

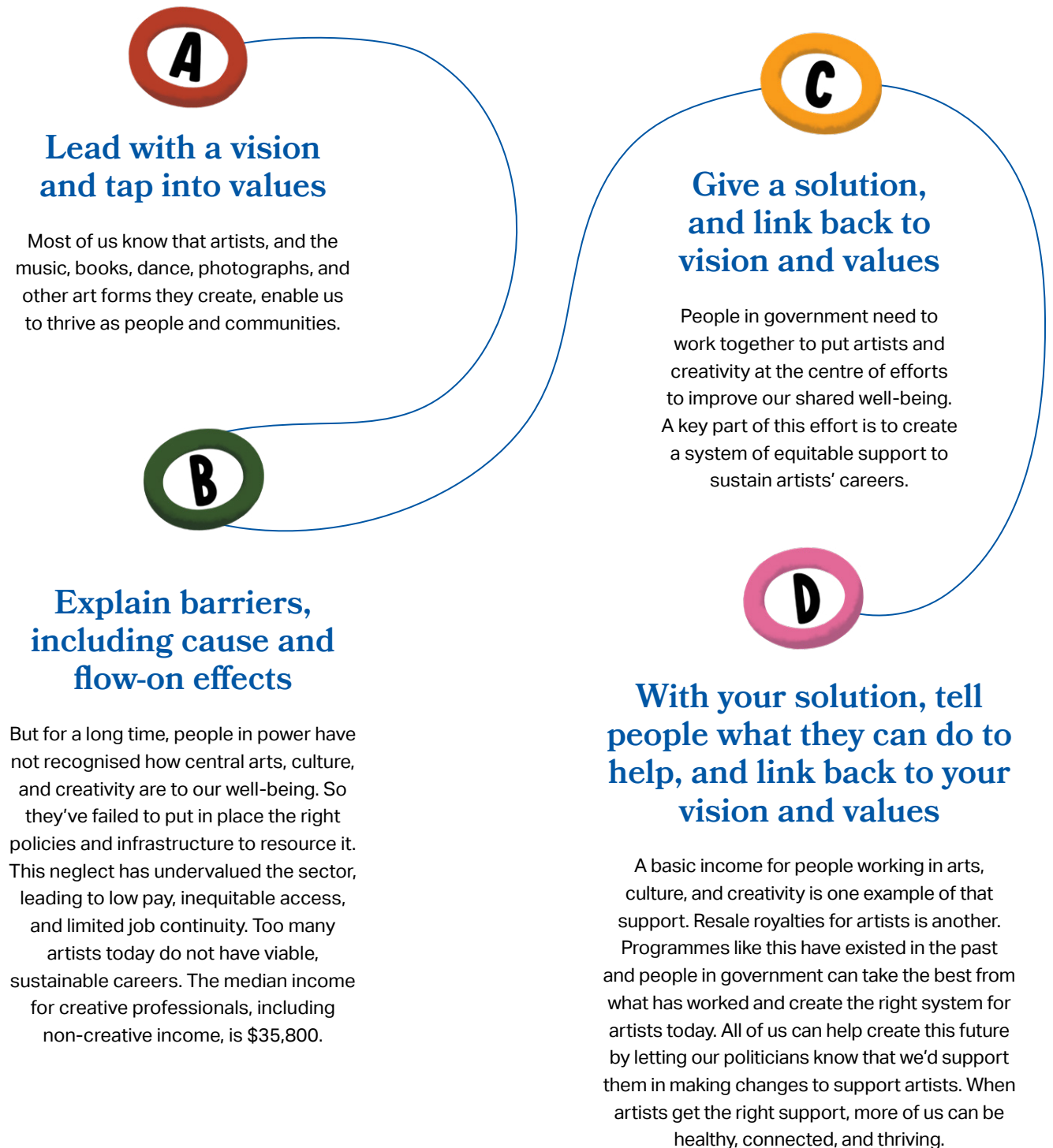
**D**

Ends with solutions, and names who should act, and what they should do.

Use explanatory chains to create a small story that includes facts. Put people in the picture. Persuadable audiences don't often have a clear idea of who can create change, especially upstream. You can increase people's sense of control and agency if you identify the people in a system who can act to achieve the vision, for example, people in central or local government.

## An explanatory chain about sustainable career pathways for artists

This example shows a possible explanatory chain about sustainable careers for artists. If you use it, you can adapt it to make it specific to your campaign. You can give your audience what they need to do to help support the change you want.



## Do more of this

### Clear explanations in a newspaper article

This article on the [Guardian website](#)<sup>9</sup> draws on a UNESCO report called *Reshaping Policies for Creativity*<sup>10</sup>, and uses some clear explanations to show causes, effects, and solutions.

## Unesco warns of crisis in creative sector with 10m jobs lost due to pandemic

**Artists finding it harder than ever to make a living despite being part of one of the fastest growing industries**

### Vision and why it matters

▼  
We need to rethink how we build a sustainable and inclusive working environment for cultural and artistic professionals who play a vital role in society the world over.

### Context and cause

▼  
Government spending on creative industries was declining in the years preceding the pandemic, and COVID led to a collapse in income and employment.

### Effects

▼  
Ten million jobs in creative industries worldwide were lost in 2020 as a result of the COVID pandemic, and the increasing digitisation of cultural output means it is harder than ever for artists to make a living, a Unesco report has said.

### Solution

▼  
The report called on governments to bring labour protection of artists and cultural professionals into line with the general workforce and suggested a minimum wage for cultural workers, and better pension and sick pay for freelancers.

## Do more of this

# Leading with a vision

Here are some examples of leading with a vision

### A clear description of how people's lives will be better

"Te Rōpū Mana Toi has a vision of a future where the arts are embedded across our society, leading to a time of cultural flourishing in Aotearoa. Where every citizen lives within walking or wheelchair distance of cultural experiences and programmes that activate their individual creative potential and enhance their well-being and sense of belonging within their community."



Te Rōpū Mana Toi

### A clear and specific description

"My ultimate dream would be that Pacific creators would feel unburdened and would have the freedom to just make what they wanted."<sup>11</sup>



Dr. Lana Lopesi, author, art critic, and editor



### A concrete, specific way that lives would be different

"My future dreams and aspirations for takatāpui, the coming generation, is that we get to a point where they don't have to feel like they can't do kapa haka because they're not masculine or feminine enough. I want queer people to grow up, takatāpui people to grow up knowing they are safe and in good hands. I want them to grow up knowing that their tipuna did all they could for them to be their true and authentic selves."<sup>12</sup>



Carym Wharerau, designer

[Watch the video on Facebook](#)

### A clear description of what this village looks like

"My long-term dream for our Pacific disabled arts and artists is to build a village that is fully accessible and inclusive of all people with disabilities, whether visible or 'invisible'. It would be a village run and managed by disabled, where we would house fully adapted equipment and tools within a venue for the creative development of our disabled artists. Somewhere we can write our own history, create our own legacies, develop a succession pathway for our youth, to explore our further journeys and capture more of our narratives through the arts to share with the world."<sup>13</sup>



Fonoti Pati Umaga, musician and disability advocate

[Read the article on the Pantograph Punch website](#)







## Values that help the case for changes that will make the biggest difference

*equity, including accessibility*

*community belonging*

*purpose*

*creativity, innovation and self-direction*

*identity*

*universalism – peace, broadmindedness, inner harmony, being part of nature*

*care*

*social and environmental justice*

*connection*

In Aotearoa, most people say they value benevolence, universalism, and self-direction. But the same people think other people prioritise values such as status, image, and success. Our job is to remind people that most of us share collective, well-being values and to use these to help bring about change.

*Concepts like manaakitanga, whakapapa, kotahitanga, mauri, kaitiakitanga are important, collective values that can motivate people to support changes that make the biggest difference in people's lives.*

[Read more about human values on page 71.](#)

**Do more of this**

## Tap into the values of identity and universalism

Here are some examples

"All art fills us with emotion — happiness, sadness, nostalgia, lust, anger. Whether it be in the form of paintings, music, cuisine, dancing, theatre, etc. It enables us to find ourselves and lose ourselves at the same time. I believe art reminds us we are human, it reminds us of our souls, it reminds us of beauty beyond what we are sometimes capable of. It also gives us a sense of direction, of belief, of comfort, consolation, and guidance. If you don't think so, try sitting at home with no movies, Spotify, no Netflix, no books, no pictures, no painting, no board games. We are quite literally surrounded by art. It makes us who we are."<sup>14</sup>

▲  
Pene Pati, opera singer

[Watch the video on YouTube](#)



## Do more of this

# Tap into an equity value with the idea that art is for everyone

Here are some examples

**"How you tell your story and express your art needs no qualification. It doesn't need a set format, it doesn't need a TV camera. It just needs you to answer the call."**

▲  
Stacey Morrison, broadcaster and author

**"I just want to put a challenge, or a pātai out to any other brown queer person who thinks they're not good enough for art or art is not a thing for them. Try it. Give it a go. Jump in. Get involved."<sup>15</sup>**

▲  
FAFSWAG arts collective<sup>16</sup>

**"You can write a shopping list that's poetry, you can write non-fiction that is poetry, you can be poetic in your everyday life."<sup>17</sup>**

▲  
Lily Holloway, author and editor<sup>18</sup>



Check out this feature on Radio New Zealand of the Arts Access campaign, *I'm an artist*<sup>19</sup>

▼  
This was a national campaign aiming to change attitudes and behaviour towards people with a disability, sensory impairment, or mental ill-health. It featured posters with a photo of a local artist, who happens to have a disability, with their work, accompanied by the text 'I'm an artist'.

Allyson Hamblett, an artist at Spark Centre of Creative Development in Auckland, is fascinated with the stories of the people she paints. Changing attitudes about disability is something Allyson aims to do with her artwork.

**'Society holds many preconceptions about disability, based on fear of the unknown. I like challenging these misconceptions.'**

Allyson, who has cerebral palsy, is particularly interested in portraiture and figure drawing. She also likes to experiment with different art forms, including writing and composing her own music.



## Tap into the values of connectedness, interconnectedness, and identity

Here are some examples

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"We want to enable the rippling benefits of arts activation to flow through communities supporting social cohesion, well-being benefits, and a sense of place."<sup>20</sup>



Waikato Arts Navigator Regional Strategy

"I'll never forget being on the bus home after the last event at Verb 2019 and being overwhelmed with emotion after spending the weekend attending events featuring so many Asian authors. It felt like such a turning point to have so many writers I could consider contemporaries... The other time I've had the same feeling was while rehearsing for a staged reading of Nathan Joe's play *Scenes from a Yellow Peril* – the entire cast and crew were Asian. It's the dual power of being seen and finding your people!"<sup>21</sup>



Chris Tse, poet and writer

"Ngā taonga pūoro is something that affects our whole te whare tapa wha. It is another reo Māori we can express ourselves in. It's something that combines the physical with the spiritual and with how we think about the world, and how we create things. I really saw that when I was working in psychiatric care, it was a way people could express their identity without being scrutinised, or without worrying about making a mistake. I've been gifted from taonga pūoro a worldview that I can take into every part of my life."<sup>22</sup>



Ruby Solly, musician and taonga pūoro practitioner

"In a way, art also substituted the loneliness and isolation my mother and I felt while settling into a very much white neighbourhood. It was through a piece of paper and a pencil where I learnt I had the agency to create the worlds that I envisioned. I drew the friends I imagined, girls of colour with matching fringes and outfits, we would sit and eat together, celebrating our love for Hello Kitty. The idea of creating and building worlds has always stuck with me, and perhaps one of the reasons I'm so drawn to radical works by feminists of colour."<sup>23</sup>



Helen Yueng, researcher, writer, zine-maker and illustrator

"For me, storytelling exists to remind us that we are not alone."



Shane Boshier, director, actor, dramaturg, and producer

[on theatre]: "It was also about finding community. I have lifelong friends that I've met through doing work with Prayas. It also was about just remembering art forms from back home and reminding ourselves where we've come from and where we are... The goal of Prayas<sup>24</sup> was to bring English language theatre from India to the mainstream public. It was to try and convert the belief that India is just about Bollywood and butter chicken."<sup>25</sup>



Sananda Chatterjee, director and curator

## Explain the connection between the arts, culture, and creativity that people value and what's needed to support artists and the sector



When you talk about the value of arts, culture, and creativity, always link it to what's needed to support artists and the sector. It's not easy for people to see what causes under-resourcing in the sector and what changes are needed for the sector to flourish.

## If we don't fill the gap between what people value and what changes are needed, people use their own quick-thinking explanations

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### Common quick-thinking explanations to avoid include:

**Individualism:** individual artists need to solve their own problems, and if they fail, it's because they made the wrong choice, didn't have enough talent, or didn't make enough effort.

**Consumerism:** the best thing I can do to support art is to spend my own money on art.

**Marketism:** the market will identify and fund the best art.

Show people how putting the right systems and structures in place will have collective benefits for the whole sector and our society.

## A 'public good' frame is effective

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Use 'art as a public good' framing to talk about how arts, culture, and creativity builds health and well-being, but to do that relies on the right support.

### Here are three suggestions:

- ▶ Arts, culture, and creativity are essential infrastructures for healthy, vibrant communities where people want to live, work, and raise their families. And like other community infrastructure such as transport, schools, and hospitals, the sector needs the right policies and resources.
- ▶ Governments need to provide the right systems and funding structures to sustain the sector so that arts, culture, and creativity can improve and sustain people's well-being.
- ▶ Vibrant, creative communities produce well people who are connected to each other and to what matters. Community structures such as libraries, art spaces, education spaces, play spaces, and green spaces and organisational structures such as services, policies, and procedures produce an environment where we can all create, innovate, and stretch ourselves in ways that support our well-being.

## Do more of this

# Explain the connection between what's valued and what's needed

Here are some examples

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"Society is saying we want art, and we want more of it, but we don't value it in the same way as we value other things. We love the joy it brings, the view into other people's worlds, the perspectives and portals, but the people who are creating these amazing experiences and allowing us to travel through different times and spaces are not remunerated in the same way [as other careers]."



Jessica Palalagi, Kaiwhakahaere Matua – General Manager, The Arts Foundation Te Tumu Toi

"Now we have an opportunity to continue to re-think the system and address issues like sustainable funding, accessibility and look towards the development of a long-term strategy for the arts, culture and creative sector."



Dr. Jeremy Mayall, CEO, Creative Waikato

Read Jeremy's article, [A 2022 vision for change](#), on the [Creative Waikato website](#) To see an example of identifying the upstream changes that are needed for the sector to flourish and naming people who can make the changes.<sup>26</sup>

"There are many terrific artists in New Zealand who just happen to have a disability. Here are five. Fortunately, they get support and motivation from innovative creative spaces around the country. However, these creative spaces are vulnerable to a lack of funding and policy changes. Central and local government, health and welfare agencies, and the private sector all have a role to play in ensuring their sustainability."<sup>27</sup>



Richard Benge MNZM, Executive Director of Arts Access Aotearoa, talking about the "I'm an Artist" campaign

[Read Stella's Story on the Creative Rights website](#)

"Creative rights make sending work out into the world like this rewarding. Everyone feels valued, respected, and recognised for their work. When a production company wants to turn it into a movie, the publisher is there to negotiate the rights. They keep Stella involved – so she can keep earning from the success of her work and stay connected creatively. And somewhere out there, in bedrooms and libraries and classrooms around the country, Stella's book is lighting fires in other young minds. Young minds are now dreaming of writing their own books. And Stella, feeling strong, is ready to sit down and start writing her next story."<sup>28</sup>



Created by Creative Rights = Creative Reads. Illustrated by Ezra Whittaker, written by Toby Morris.







**Avoid this**

**Avoid excluding the big changes that would address the need**

Here is an example



This example does not identify necessary upstream actions, like policy changes. Instead, it engages individualism and consumerism, which reinforces unhelpful mindsets and narratives and doesn't draw attention to changes that will make the biggest difference.

## Emphasise strengths rather than struggles





## Highlight the strengths of creative people, communities, and the sector

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**It's understandable to want to start with problems and struggles (because they're real), but if you start by telling people the sector is in trouble, it can make people feel hopeless.**

Problem-led stories about struggling artists do not work to persuade audiences to support the changes needed for artists to thrive. Stories that lead with struggles also reinforce the unhelpful mindset that success is about individual effort and artists should try harder or make different choices. Emphasise the strengths of artists.

While the challenges the sector faces are real and serious, leading communications with these challenges does not help build support for the changes you need that will make the biggest difference. A communication piece highlighting problems may feel successful if it earns short-term funding or other support, but the evidence shows it won't shift mindsets about the critical importance of arts, culture, and creativity in society.

If you start by emphasising strengths, you can bypass an individualistic mindset and get people thinking about collective systems and barriers.

Do more of this

## Lead with strengths

Here are some examples

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"The Springboard Award means I can continue to focus on Hiapo, on developing and sustaining a practice that is just starting to really take hold in my community. I am so proud to be Niuean and sharing this art form is just a slice of the beauty that our people have to offer. We are innovative and resilient in keeping our traditions alive in our communities. It is hard but good work. This award helps me to continue the journey of that kaupapa."<sup>29</sup>



Cora-Allan Wickliffe, artist

"By definition artists are innovators and lateral thinkers. They see ideas and solutions where others may not. They are masters at problem-solving as this is a core part of their creative work."<sup>30</sup>



Waikato Arts Navigator Regional Strategy

"Being witness to the metamorphosis that occurred in these young disabled artists and dancers as they went from feeling apprehensive and nervous at the idea of performing at such a prestigious event, to seeing them after the performance glowing with pride and joy was both inspiring and a highlight. This is a powerful example of dreams and possibilities realised when we nurture the talents and skills of our youth and create opportunities for them to take part."<sup>31</sup>



Fonoti Pati Umaga, musician and disability advocate

"Artists need to be supported to survive these conditions like everyone else. Their self-initiating and resourceful momentum are deeply disrupted."<sup>32</sup>



Sally Smart, artist, in a campaign by The National Association for Visual Arts in Australia.

"We are the early adopters of challenging the status quo and the gate swingers of uncharted territories. Our empathy opens our hearts to deeper connections. Our curiosity opens our minds to greater possibilities... Together we make our dreams happen. We are a community of do-ers. Creators. Igniters. Explorers. And leaders. We conquered the fears of yesterday, created the change of today, and foster the innovation of tomorrow. We empower and encourage everyone to use new ideas and take new action towards making the world and our place in it better through creativity."<sup>33</sup>



World Creativity & Innovation Week Manifesto



Avoid this

## Avoid leading with struggles

Here are some examples

These are examples of leading with the struggles of being an artist, rather than highlighting the strengths of artists. They were part of an Australian campaign calling for liveable income support for artists.<sup>34</sup> Leading with struggles can make people feel helpless and doesn't work to build support for change.



National Association for Visual Arts, Australia (NAVA)

“

I now have to re-skill to enter another industry to gain employment. I have already had to sell most of my assets to survive the year and now cannot afford to pay for another education. I currently have severe depression, anxiety and financial debt.

- ARTIST, NAVA SNAP SURVEY JAN 2021

“

I had a research position at a local university lined up, my dream job, and then the whole department lost its funding.

- ARTIST, NAVA SNAP SURVEY JAN 2021



## Ngā Toi Māori advocacy reflections

# Strengths-based narratives

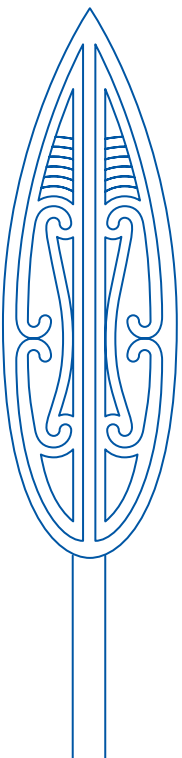
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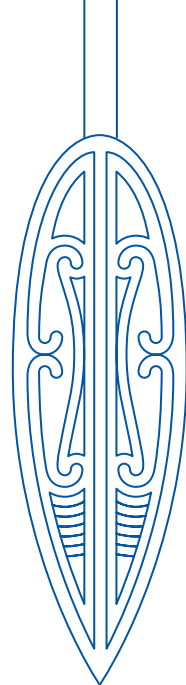
**Strength-based narratives can overcome unhelpful thinking that creates a barrier for the sector.**

The knowledge holders we spoke with reflected the mana, strength and leadership stories of creatives — we can harness them to overcome unhelpful thinking about artists.

When there is such a pressing need, it can feel even more important to lead with the problems and significant hardships that Māori creatives face so people understand them. But framing research tells us that leading with strengths is far more effective.

Leading with problems can inadvertently lead people to think of creatives in terms of deficit, and people often fill in the blanks with their own unhelpful mindsets and explanations. For example, when talking about the impacts on performing artists during COVID restrictions, 'maybe it's their fault for not picking a more stable career'.





**When we lead with strengths, we can still communicate the significant challenges that creatives face.**

Strength-based narratives work to sideline unhelpful thinking and encourage audiences to think of people's skills, leadership, and contributions, rather than being defined by problems or deficits.<sup>35</sup>

This narrative approach affirms what is already known and practised within te ao Māori – recognising and upholding the mana of others – and in this case, fellow creatives. Our knowledge holders shared many examples of strengths-based narratives about Māori creatives, the cultural sector, and rangatahi as our future leaders and innovators.

Knowledge holders spoke of so many different strengths of creatives as translators between different ways of knowing and understanding. They spoke of talented young people working with integrity, dedication to various kaupapa, perseverance, resistance in overcoming barriers, championing art forms 'haere tonu', and the strengths of creative communities:

*'But for us in the performing arts, an advantage is that we move as a whānau, as a collective, right, it's not about the one, it's always about the all, and in the performing arts that's the real strength of us really, is that we are able to come together as one and to find the strength in that and to be able to move in spite of everything'.<sup>36</sup>*

We encourage you to continue to lead with the strengths of creatives and communities in order to help overcome unhelpful and deficit-based thinking.

## Continue to tell stories about ngā toi Māori



*“Evidence needs compelling stories. Compelling stories need new language that moves people to act.”*

Linda Tuhiwai Smith CNZM, Distinguished Professor, Te Whare Wānanga o Awanuiāraangi<sup>2</sup>

## Here are some reflections from our knowledge holder interviews and story session wānanga

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These reflections complement the other recommendations, recognise the narrative work being led by advocates of ngā toi Māori, and show some of the ways the sector and public might support this work as identified by advocates and knowledge holders.

Telling stories as tangata whenua of Aotearoa is vital. Māori communities and artists have powerful stories to share about the impacts arts, culture, and creativity have on hauora and identity, and on whānau and community connectedness with each other and te taiao. Māori artists already uphold and communicate the mana of ancestral knowledge. Artists translate the role that creativity holds in our ways of understanding the world, passing down knowledge, and within resistance and reclamation.

Knowledge holder, Tanea Heke MNZM, specifically mentioned her central vision for the sector of continuing to share stories, and in particular:

*"The importance of our young ones being able to understand that their culture counts, and we are those people who reinforce that about our culture. The mahi we do cements us as a people in terms of society, and for us across the arts sector it's about what we represent and what we can teach the world ... it's about challenging people ... and the intangible elements."<sup>37</sup>*

### **Compelling stories are at the heart of leading with a vision, explaining barriers and giving solutions**

Using stories with the upstream vision, explanation of barriers, and solutions will help persuadable audiences understand the barriers and systems-level actions needed to support ngā toi Māori. This understanding will help enable an environment that centres Te Tiriti o Waitangi, help enable shared decision making, and support a strong and resilient sector.

## The causes of barriers for Māori creatives and communities need explaining

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**While we shouldn't lead communication with barriers, multiple barriers do exist for Māori artists. Part of strengths-and-vision-led narratives is supporting advocates to also communicate barriers and pathways to realising hopes and ambitions for our communities. The challenge is to explain rather than describe barriers and show clear causes of these problems.**

Barriers include:

- limited pathways that lead whānau to believe that careers in art, culture, and creativity aren't viable options
- historical funding criteria, which have focused on outputs, financial incentives, comparison, and competition, based on criteria that don't reflect tikanga values
- current funding criteria, which silos people and communities, or lumps art forms from one group together
- structural racism in funding accessibility, being a lone voice advocating within organisations, a lack of cultural capability or exposure in partners and audiences, and limited capacity
- economic barriers, the gig economy, and reliance on private sector funding.

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**Solutions can centre on partnership, pathways, accessibility, and protection.**

Specific upstream solutions include:

- understand the worldviews, perspectives, and values that inform decisions about governance and funding
- make sure tino rangatiratanga and Te Tiriti o Waitangi are at the heart of shared decision making
- consider who benefits from arts and culture funding
- ensure funding information and processes are inclusive and accessible
- make sure hapū and iwi have the resources to protect and revitalise local knowledge and cultural practices
- ensure artists have strong financial support to do their work
- provide viable career options and opportunities for whānau to consider, and show education pathways from a young age.



Do more of this



### Lead with strengths

Here are some examples

These examples include powerful stories that convey the importance of arts, culture, and creativity in cultural identity, and connection, and in revitalising art forms. Following a vision, we can extend these stories into a 'systems story' that explains the specific barriers and support needed to support artists and creative practice.

**"Mahi toi is rongoā, it's my salve and my salvation, it resonates through all aspects of my life and can't be separated from who I am."**<sup>40</sup>

▲  
Bonita Bigham, artist and chair, Te Maruata Roopu Whakahere, LGNZ

**"My art is about reconnection to get on the path to reclamation. To find my role and where I stand on this whenua, and where I stand in my whakapapa."**<sup>38</sup>

▲  
Jessica Thompson-Carr, artist and writer

**"When I am using poi it's activating a lot of my femininity, it's activating a lot of my tipuna, it's activating a lot of my mana, it's where I get a lot of my confidence from. So to bring that with vogue femme and vogueing, which is another... outlet that activates all four parts of me, it just feels... ethereal... it feels like you, it feels wrong, it feels right. It feels like I am just challenging so many different things. It's fed me so much life and confidence... Ballroom and vogueing just such a precious sort of taonga for me, that definitely needs a bit more light and attention on it."**<sup>41</sup>

**"What weaving has given me is the confidence in myself, as a Maori wāhine, to be able to stand up in this world and say I am here, I am Māori, I am a weaver."**<sup>39</sup>

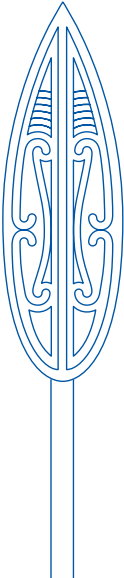
▲  
Manaia Carswell, first graduate of the Hetet School of Maori Art online course

▲  
Carym Wharerau, designer

### Ngā Toi Māori advocacy reflections



### Telling our own stories



We heard about the central importance of stories being told and seen, by and for Māori communities. To support communities sharing their own stories about art, culture, and creativity, we recommend co-developing communications and advocacy campaigns and approaches with a clear directive from communities and creatives.

This needs to include:

- providing the support needed for communities to develop campaigns and approaches
- giving resources directly to community leaders and organisations to create and deliver communications for their communities.

## Use the expertise of communities to shift mindsets and narratives together



**If you're working to make arts, culture,  
and creativity more accessible, relevant,  
and valued for your culture or community,  
you'll already know many of the unhelpful,  
dominant narratives and mindsets that exist**

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Use this knowledge and people in your community to lead the work to create more helpful, deeper explanations and narratives. Together, you'll have specific barriers and solutions you can use in your explanations and unique visions for what people's lives could be like if those visions were realised. The shared values and strengths of people in your community will also be specific.

Every piece of advocacy has its own nuances, audiences, cultures, history, and objectives. The stories from Pacific, Asian, Deaf, and disabled people, LGBTQIA+ people, and other communities will be different, but the strategy of keeping to your narrative, leading with a vision and values, focusing on strengths, and giving clear explanations is the same. When everyone uses their unique instruments to play the same tune, over time, powerful music is possible.

The examples throughout this guide come from a range of communities and we can all share more examples that help persuadable audiences understand and support changes that will make the biggest difference in people's lives.

*Thank you to the artists I work with for their talent...incredible collaborators, like pieces of a map, they place their art beside my art and a greater picture of the landscape appears... It is the artists who bring us this freedom. Their relentless process to refine their craft because it takes so much work to communicate these moments. Opera, theatre, dance, and music. The live performers who give themselves to the world. I am thankful to my fellow Pacific women artists who have the courage to step outside the boundaries of the everyday. It is a privilege to work with you. We are walking stories, many generations survived so we can be the heroines of the story living in the now, carrying that story into the future. As we emerge from this time, there will be power in our choices. How we walk, and to where.*

Nina Nawalowalo ONZM, director, performer and co-founder of The Conch



## Focus on artists as people and the systems that support them



**Emphasise that behind the books, music, films, dance and images that we love are the people who create them and the collective efforts and systems that support them**

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Making the artists visible and showing the systems that enable them to create helps people understand that these artists need the right conditions to thrive.

We already emphasise the strengths of artists in our communication — but we can do more of this and link those strengths to systems that support them. We can start talking more about artists' strengths as storytellers, innovators, agitators and leaders, and the conditions they need, rather than 'the products' they create.

Do more of this

## Tell stories that centre artists

Here are some examples



This page on Copyright Licensing New Zealand's website is a good example of focusing on artists. It emphasises supporting and appreciating artists themselves, rather than just appreciating their work.<sup>42</sup>

*A love and appreciation of books goes hand in hand with a love and appreciation of the creators and authors who wrote them.*

[See the page on the Copyright Licensing New Zealand website](#)



A good example of centering artists by highlighting the bravery and dedication that goes into their craft.<sup>43</sup>

Nina Nawalowalo ONZM, director, performer, and co-founder of The Conch

[Watch the video on YouTube](#)



Advocates for a universal basic income to support the essential work of artists.<sup>44</sup>

Jo Randerson ONZM, writer, director and performer

[Watch the video on YouTube](#)

Avoid this

## Avoid centring the products rather than the artists and systems

Here is an example



This example from an Irish campaign shows what talking about the arts as a product, rather than centring artists as people can look like. Always focus on the people behind the creativity.



National Campaign for the Arts, Ireland (NCFA)



## Use compelling language



Use more accessible ways to talk about arts, culture, and creativity; choose concrete, specific words; and use metaphors to help explain complex ideas.

## Use wider and more everyday language to talk about the sector

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Talk and write about 'arts, culture, and creativity' and 'creative cultural practice' rather than 'the arts'. This advice may be surprising as 'the arts' is a common term that many people use.

Research shows that talking about 'the arts' or 'arts and culture' brings to mind a more limited and elite understanding of arts, culture, and creativity. Arts, culture, and creativity broadens people's understanding and invites them in.

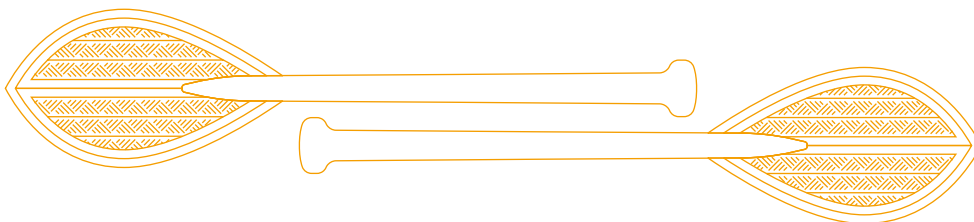
In this guide, we've used 'arts, culture, and creativity.'<sup>45,46</sup> As advocates, you'll be listening and learning all the time about what words work best to invite everyone into the conversation.

Other language options to try out are:

- ngā toi and the arts
- arts and creativity
- creative arts
- creativity and creatives
- creative professionals
- creative sector, creative communities, or creative organisations

### A note about the term ngā toi

The term ngā toi represents a deep and specific concept of Māori creative practice and encompasses a breadth of Māori knowledge. Creative New Zealand Toi Aotearoa is working with the ngā toi Māori sector to provide a definition of ngā toi that explains its broader meaning and significance.



Pacific arts reflection:

## A commitment to new language

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We heard from our knowledge holders that 'Pacific arts or artists' may not reflect the diversity of cultures, peoples, and art forms encompassed within this term. Our knowledge holders spoke about a continued commitment to finding new language and ways to speak about creatives and art forms across Te Moana-nui-a-Kiwa (The Pacific Ocean).<sup>47</sup>

# Metaphors bring ideas to life, help explain complex things, and help people remember

A metaphor takes something we understand on a practical everyday level, like the weather or machines, and connects it to something more abstract or complex.

This connection helps people understand a deeper explanation for complex issues.

Testing metaphors with audiences who are open to persuasion will help show which are the most effective at helping people see the big changes the sector needs to flourish.

The suggestions in this section have not yet been tested.



## Magic and transformation

Artists are a transforming prism – they take in light and refract colours and possibilities

Arts, culture, and creativity is a window to possibilities and dreams

Arts, culture, and creativity is a portal to other worlds

Arts, culture, and creativity is magic



## Connection

Arts, culture, and creativity is a glue that connects us

Arts, culture, and creativity connects us to each other, to our own creativity, and to our environment

Arts, culture, and creativity is part of our wholeness as humans



## Korowai

Arts, culture, and creativity is a korowai that protects us<sup>48</sup>

Our well-being is a beautiful woven cloak — the horizontal threads are arts, culture, and creativity, and the vertical threads are all other elements of society

When arts, culture, and creativity touch all things, the result is strong, beautiful, warm, and comforting



## Foundation

Arts, culture, and creativity anchors us

Arts, culture, and creativity is at the foundation of our world

Arts, culture, and creativity is the core, or the beating heart of the creative industries

The impact of arts, culture, and creativity is like a stone dropped in a pond – the far-reaching ripples are the impact that spreads from the creative catalyst



## Nature, gardening, or growth

Arts, culture, and creativity is a garden filled with many different plants, providing nourishment and beauty

Arts, culture, and creativity helps to grow healthy tamariki

Arts, culture, and creativity is like the sun and rain that create a thriving society

Arts, culture, and creativity is a braided river – with many streams intersecting and flowing in a positive direction



## Journey

Arts, culture, and creativity is a rudder steering us to a new future

We're on a creative journey

Artists are our navigators

Arts, culture, and creativity is a navigation of self, place, and purpose

Arts, culture, and creativity gives us a map for our collective future



## Ecosystem

Arts, culture, and creativity is an ecosystem that we're all part of



## Music

Arts, culture, and creativity is the music of the soul



## Light

Arts, culture, and creativity illuminates and lights the creative spark within us

Do more of this

## Using metaphors to help explain

Here are some examples

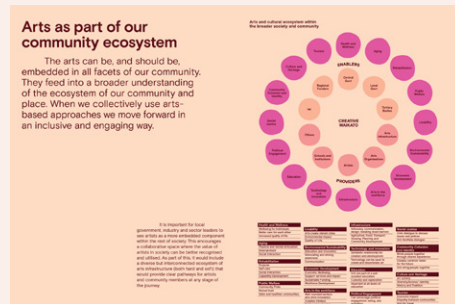


A weaving metaphor about creativity and well-being

**"Creativity is essential to a thriving humanity. It is how we understand who we are and how we connect to one another. It is interwoven through all facets of our well-being.**

**This intricately woven cloth is our collective experience. In it, we can see the horizontal threads as arts and culture, and the vertical threads as everything else. When both work together, with arts and culture touching each strand of all other aspects of society, the interlocking strands become beautiful, strong, and inspiring."**<sup>49</sup>

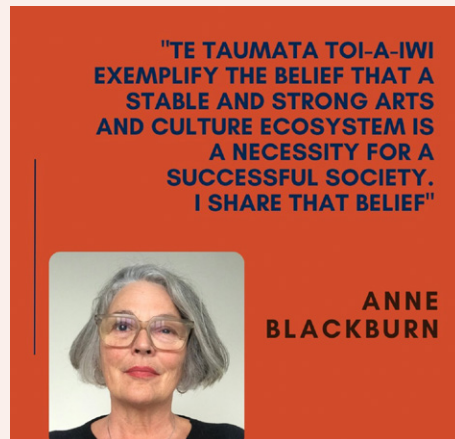
▲  
Waikato Arts Navigator Regional Strategy



An ecosystem metaphor

**"The arts can be, and should be, embedded in all facets of our community. They feed into a broader understanding of the ecosystem of our community and place. When we collectively use arts-based approaches we move forward in an inclusive and engaging way."**<sup>50</sup>

▲  
Waikato Arts Navigator Regional Strategy



An ecosystem metaphor

**"Te Taumata Toi-a-Iwi exemplify the belief that a stable and strong arts and culture ecosystem is a necessity for a successful society. I share that belief."**<sup>51</sup>

▲  
Anne Blackburn, Trustee, Te Taumata Toi-a-Iwi

## Replace abstract language with concrete, specific language

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People can more easily understand things they can picture. We can help this understanding by using concrete, specific language. For example, if we're talking about a photographer, say 'photographer' rather than 'creative professional'. Say 'sculpture' instead of 'artwork'. Say 'more money' instead of 'enhanced funding'. Instead of 'creativity enhances your well-being', you could say, 'creativity makes you smile!'.

Use concrete examples. For example, instead of saying 'improve access', you could say 'blind audience members can enjoy the performance at the same time as people who can see by listening to a real-time description of the actions with earphones'.





# Use messengers or storytellers your audience trusts





## The messengers who give us information matter

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People use credibility and trust as a mental shortcut — it's less work to take a trusted person's advice than assess all the information ourselves. People also use mental shortcuts when deciding who to trust or who is credible.

Research on messengers and trust is complex, but suggests we should use:

- a range of messengers
- messengers with shared values
- messengers with mana in their community
- messengers who are well qualified to comment on the context of the message
- surprising messengers, for example, a dairy farmer talking about the power and freedom that art gave them
- intergenerational messengers, for example, rangatahi (young people) talking to pakeke (adults).

### **Trusted storytellers provide social proof**

Trusted storytellers<sup>52</sup> can give positive social proof and improve the credibility of a message. Showing people that other people they trust support change and are acting on it is more effective than giving people negative facts about a problem.

### **Repetition gives credibility and persuades people**

People are more likely to accept beliefs and positions that they see frequently in order to fit in. Repetition from trusted others gives credibility to the information you are trying to get across. But this cuts both ways – repeating unhelpful information gives it credibility.

### **Pair the right messenger with the right message**

People trust messengers and narratives that represent their values. People with lived experience are authentic and powerful messengers. It's important to pair the right messenger with the right message. For example, in a campaign about vaccinations, respected artists shared their 'why': why they do what they do, why they love their creative practice, and why they choose to be vaccinated.

[Read about the vaccination campaign on the Creative New Zealand Toi Aotearoa website](#)

# Big picture planning

Use these questions and the checklist on the next page to help plan your advocacy communications. Remember to clarify your vision and solution first. This will help you plan your own writing and will help you explain things more clearly to your audiences.

For example, you might be trying to persuade a council to fund a ngā toi Māori festival, or you're trying to increase the numbers of Pacific students enrolling in arts, culture, or creative education.

## Use these questions to help you at the start

What is the purpose of your communication and what outcome do you want?

What do you want your audience to understand?

What mindsets do you want to activate?  
What do they sound like?

What do you want your audience to do?

What mindsets do you want to avoid?  
What do they sound like?

Who is your base of supporters?

Who is your persuadable audience?

Who are your messengers, and through what channels?

# A communication checklist

## Check your communication:

Talks mainly to your persuadable audience

Tells your own story

Uses a vision + explanation + solution formula

Taps into intrinsic (internally rewarded) values like care, connection, contribution, or equity

Uses a clear explanation about the barriers to your vision — what is the barrier, how did it get there, what are the flow-on effects, who created it, and names who can remove the barriers and what they need to do

Uses helpful metaphors and frames, such as 'for the public good' and 'part of our ecosystem'

Uses concrete, specific language

Finishes by reminding people of your why

## Check your communication does not:

Talk just to your base of supporters

Talk to entrenched opponents

Negate or myth-bust opponents' stories

Use unhelpful narratives or frames that trigger thinking about individualism, fatalism, marketism, or us versus them

Tap into extrinsic (external) values such as money, fear, safety, and power

Use a lot of facts to describe a problem rather than using facts as part of an explanation

Use abstract or vague language

# Section 2

A summary of research findings  
and insights from the findings



The advice in this guide is based on research specific to this project, the science and theory of narrative change, and on what we know from other narrative work and campaigns around the world. This section explains what research was done and the insights from it.

## New narratives can help audiences understand and support the need for change

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A flourishing arts, culture, and creative sector has the right support to enable it to flourish. This could be labour protection for workers, a basic income, copyright royalties, accessibility laws, health protection for freelancers, and better funding. At the moment, many people who value arts, culture, and creativity, don't see what support is needed for the sector to thrive.

### Researchers reviewed literature, analysed current narratives, and interviewed knowledge holders

The advice in this guide comes from sector advocates and researchers and is supported by Creative New Zealand Toi Aotearoa.

Researchers at The Workshop wanted to find out three things:

- What are some of the mindsets people hold about arts, culture, and creativity in Aotearoa?
- What are the unhelpful ways of talking about arts, culture, and creativity?
- What are more helpful ways of talking that can deepen understanding and build support for the arts, culture, and creative sector?

The Workshop worked with Creative New Zealand Toi Aotearoa sector advisory group Te Rōpū Mana Toi, representatives from Te Taumata Toi-a-Iwi, Arts Wellington Toi o Taraika, The Arts Foundation Te Tumu Toi, and Creative New Zealand Toi Aotearoa staff.

Researchers interviewed knowledge holders and expert advocates, reviewed relevant research literature, and analysed the narratives currently used by advocates and opponents.



### **Advocates want people to understand the value of arts, culture, and creativity**

In interviews, artists and arts advocates wanted to talk about how art was all around us, the contribution it makes to people's lives and to children's lives. They wanted people to know that arts, culture, and creativity work is work, and it's valuable. They wanted people to understand the contributions and hardships of artists, long-term challenges in the sector, and problems with current funding models.

### **People value creativity, but they don't see the systems and structures needed to support it**

The research showed that many New Zealanders do value art, culture and creativity, and see its contribution to well-being,<sup>53</sup> but centring communication on well-being alone isn't enough to influence funding, policy, or infrastructure decisions.

Most people are currently unable to see the connection between the arts, culture, and creativity that they value and the necessary policies, funding, infrastructure and support needed to create it.

They don't currently understand the structural and systemic barriers and solutions needed to support artists and the arts sector.

### **Opponents focus on money and spending**

Unhelpful thinking from opponents focuses on government spending and consumer taxpayers. For example, 'if money is going to arts, culture, and creativity, it's not going to hospitals'. The problem with this thinking is not that it's inaccurate, but that it plays into an 'us versus them' and 'separate' narrative that shuts down deeper, more nuanced thinking about arts, culture, and creativity and collective well-being.

Art is also seen as a luxury, a 'nice to have', or it is not productive, or is elitist.<sup>54</sup> These unhelpful narratives activate a consumer mindset. This thinking also stops people from understanding the role of government and legislation in supporting arts, culture, and creativity.

### **What this means**

Understanding current narratives helps us reframe conversations to build support for changes we need. Communication should not repeat or get caught up in trying to argue against unhelpful narratives.

Replace unhelpful narratives with more helpful narratives that focus on the 'public and social good' of arts, culture, and creativity.

[See examples of helpful narratives on pages 16-17](#)

# Section 3

The theory and science of effective narratives for change





**This section explains some of the theory  
and science of narrative work.  
It helps underpin the recommendations  
and research insights in this guide.**

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**This section covers:**

- the role of narratives in systems change (changes that make the biggest difference to people's lives)
- what narratives and mindsets are
- how our information environment and fast-thinking brains influence understanding
- whether your audience supports, opposes, or is undecided about change
- values and the role they play in building support for change.

**Systems change can change people's lives**

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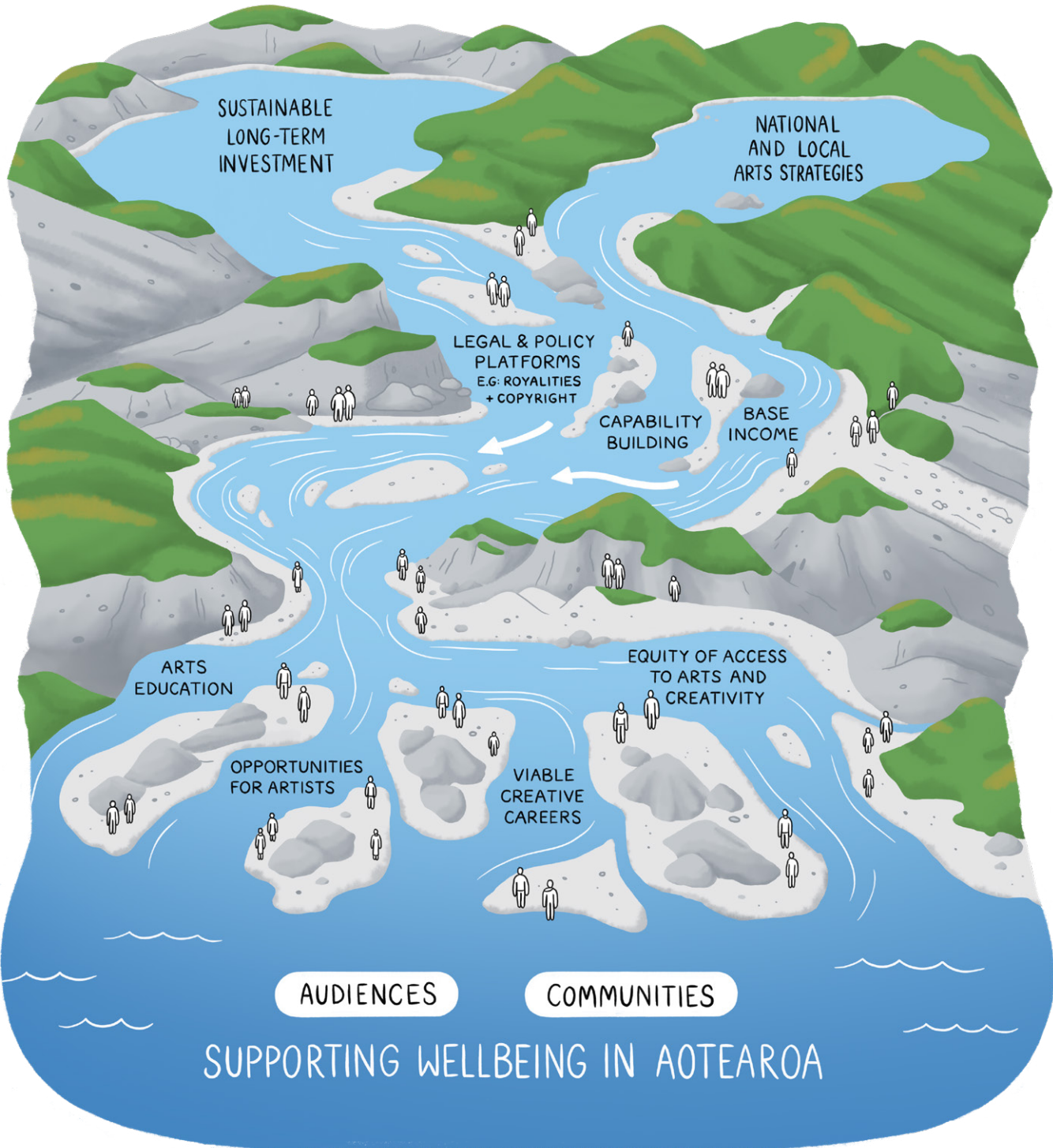
Narrative work is an emerging field, has connections to activism, and is focused on kinder, more equitable narratives. This work is just one part of what it takes for systems change — changes that make the biggest difference in people's lives.

An upstream–downstream metaphor of a river can help explain systems change. Downstream are the outcomes most people see and enjoy. If we go upstream, we can see the social, environmental and cultural conditions that shape these downstream outcomes.

For example, when people look at a problem like a lack of equitable access to arts careers for disabled people, people tend to see an immediate problem in front of them and so reach for individual solutions such as sponsoring one person to get into a programme. But as arts advocates, we can see barriers further upstream like sustained underfunding, rules about who gets to participate, and the way that art is spoken about and taught (or not taught) in education.

Other upstream changes needed could be labour protection for workers, a basic income, health protection for freelancers, copyright royalties, and better funding.

The right conditions upstream flow through to artists, and support well-being for all Aotearoa



## Narratives shape what we think and do

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Narratives are patterns of meaning in our talk that tie together different stories. Much like a house is built on foundations, people's thoughts and actions are built on the narratives around them. In our information-soaked world, our fast-thinking brains take these narratives at face value and interpret them in a shallow way according to our existing beliefs.

To get people to think and act differently, we need to use narratives that work to deepen understanding and motivate people to support change.

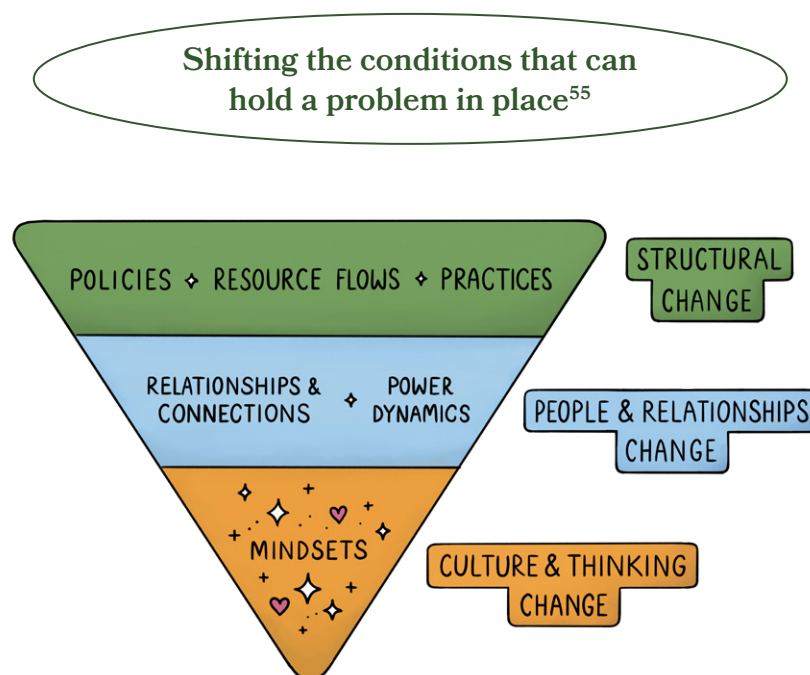
## Changes that make the biggest difference rely on mindset shift

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Lasting systems change — changes that make the biggest difference to people's lives — takes time and collective effort from people working across a field. Mindset shift is critical to building people's support for big changes. Shifting people's mindsets is one of six interconnected conditions that can hold a problem in place or create the necessary change to solve it.

Social scientists have shown that our mindsets shape what we see as normal, or a problem, in how the world works or how our society is structured. Mindsets shape our willingness to support transformations in systems, policies, and practices.

Narratives for change are about helping shift mindsets so people see what those changes are and support them. **This work takes time and needs us to use new narratives repeatedly and consistently.**



## **Effective ways to shift mindsets must work with our information environment and how our brains work**

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A key part of communicating for change is understanding the different ways people already have of thinking about an issue — and finding the dominant, unhelpful ways of thinking that could be a barrier to change.

To make a difference we need to work with the information environment we are living in and with the way our brains deal with this information. Our communication needs to both work with people's fast-thinking, emotional brains and help slow down people's thinking to get a deeper understanding.

The recommendations in this guide can help do this — leading with a vision, values, and strengths hooks into our emotions and motivates us to act, and clear explanations can slow down thinking so we take in helpful facts and understand what needs to be done and who needs to do it.

### **Instinctive or default ways of communicating are not effective**

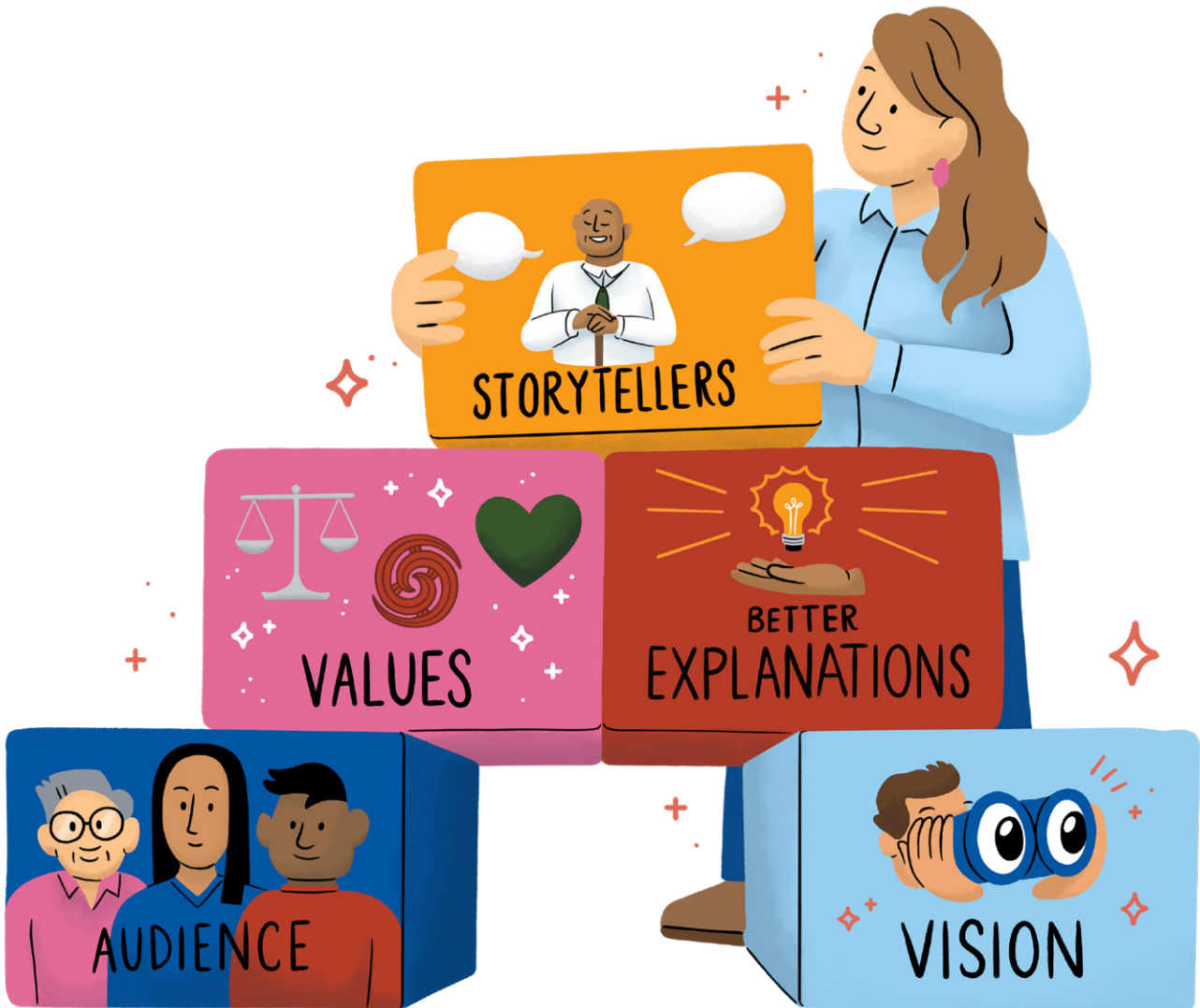
Helping people see and support the need for changes that make the biggest difference takes more than giving them more facts, persuasive stories, or emotional imagery. These instinctive or default ways of communicating can backfire.

As experts and advocates for an issue, we often communicate in default ways. We tend to:

- correct incorrect beliefs and stories by busting myths and negating
- lead with problems such as the costs to society or risks to people
- use facts, without context
- use technical language
- rely on individual emotive stories.

These default ways of communicating are not effective because people work harder to protect their existing beliefs. These ways of communicating can also inadvertently reinforce existing unhelpful narratives instead of building new narratives that help deepen people's thinking.

Five communication building blocks to work with fast-thinking brains in our overloaded information environment



To deepen people's thinking and build support for change, think about five building blocks of effective communication.

- 1 Understand your audience
- 2 Give a vision
- 3 Lead with values
- 4 Give better explanations
- 5 Use trusted storytellers

The advice in this guide uses these building blocks and specific research insights.

## **Audiences can be open to persuasion, be supporters, or be firm opponents**

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Who we're trying to persuade matters when we're trying to change the way people talk and think about change for the sector. You'll already have a good idea about whether your audience supports, opposes, or is undecided about change or the particular thing you are advocating for.

Think about three main groups of people — a base of supporters, groups of vocal opponents, and a large group of persuadable people.

### **People who do not yet have a fixed view, or who have mixed or competing views — our persuadables**

This group of people is the largest and where we should put most of our energy into explaining and persuading. This group has many different types of people and the recommendations in this guide are aimed at reaching persuadable people.

### **People who are already persuaded — our base of supporters**

We have supporters within our sector and in our whānau and communities. Supporters can help us communicate helpful narratives to people who might not have thought about the topic or made up their minds yet. Make sure most of your communication is not focused on supporters — 'preaching to the converted' is not effective in building support for change.

### **People who are firmly opposed — our opponents**

This group of people is usually consistently opposed and use similar unhelpful narratives to talk about support for arts, culture, and creativity. They might include people with a singular commercial focus or conservative media and shock jocks who find arts, culture, and creativity an easy target. It's best to avoid trying to persuade people with firmly entrenched views.

People who criticise your approach or the speed at which you're doing something may not necessarily be opponents. They may agree with the vision and the change that's needed, but not how you're going about it. Keep communicating with these people.



## Values help people connect and think deeply

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**Values matter because they are at the heart of human motivation. Engaging with people's values helps our messages reach and connect with people's emotions.**

Values research shows that what matters most to most people is:

- care for each other and the planet
- connection
- discovery
- creativity.

These are intrinsic (internally rewarded), collective values. These intrinsic values are the ones most likely to engage people in deeper thinking about complex issues and to improve systems for collective well-being.

People hold many values, so our job as advocates and communicators is to bring these intrinsic, collective values to the surface. For arts, culture, and creativity, equity was the most drawn upon value, especially about everyone being able to engage with the arts and experience the well-being benefits of creativity, cultural connection, identity, purpose and community belonging. Social justice featured strongly for groups under-served by current systems.

**[Read more about values and see a map of common values in \*The Common Cause Handbook\* on the website of The Common Cause Foundation](#)**<sup>56</sup>

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Thank you for reading this guide. If you're interested in joining us as we work together to build support for a future where artists and creativity thrive, so all New Zealanders flourish, we'd love to hear from you at [advocacy@creativenz.govt.nz](mailto:advocacy@creativenz.govt.nz)



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