



# Arts, Culture and Creativity: The Vehicle for Community Wellbeing

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Creative New Zealand Toi Aotearoa submission to the  
Review into the Future for Local Government

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27 JUNE 2022



**Whiria te tāngata ka puta he  
oranga. Whiria ko ngā mahi  
toi ka puta he rangatiratanga.**

Weaving people promotes  
wellbeing. Weaving the arts  
promotes excellence.

Above: Puhi Kai Iti Cook Landing Site. Photography by Gisborne District Council.





## FOREWORD

# What would Aotearoa look like if arts, culture and creativity were supported to ensure that every New Zealander can thrive?



*Creative New Zealand's New Zealanders and the Arts—Ko Aotearoa me na Toi 2020 research found that three out of five New Zealanders agree that the arts make an important contribution to community resilience and wellbeing, and two out of three say that they learn about different cultures through the arts.*



*Seven out of ten Māori agree that the arts are an important way of connecting with their culture and identity. Seven out of ten Pasifika people and seven out of ten of Asian New Zealanders agree that the arts are an important way of connecting with their culture.*

The arts make a powerful contribution to New Zealander's wellbeing. They tell our stories, connect people to place, bring communities together. They play a major role in shaping personal and community identity and social cohesion.

Arts and culture play a vital role in enabling thriving communities. They enliven our towns and cities and are an integral part of how we communicate, commemorate and celebrate together. Creative New Zealand's New Zealanders and the Arts—Ko Aotearoa me onā Toi 2020 research found that two-thirds of New Zealanders agree that 'arts and culture have a vital role to play in the future of where I live'. But there is work to do to improve access to the arts for all, and to realise the potential of the arts for wellbeing.

**As you work to strengthen our democracy and reimagine the role and function of local government for the future, now is the time to be bold. Let's put arts, culture and creativity at the centre of our collective efforts to improve our shared wellbeing – understanding that when we support the cultural wellbeing of communities, we are also supporting their social, economic and environmental wellbeing.**

This paper follows Creative New Zealand's earlier engagement with the Future for Local Government Review Panel. In September 2021, Arts Council Chair Caren Rangī and Chief Executive Stephen Wainwright met with the Panel. Together, we discussed the opportunity to create an ambitious agenda for how local government will evolve to improve wellbeing for all New Zealand communities and actively embody Te Tiriti partnerships – and the vital contribution arts, culture and creativity can make to this work.

**Together, we have the opportunity now to develop a much richer shared understanding of cultural wellbeing – what it is, how it supports communities, how to achieve it, how to measure it.**

Following that engagement, Creative New Zealand wanted to bring the voices of local government arts and culture leaders into the conversation. Inspired by Tūhoe leader Tamati Kruger's assertion that "dreaming is a form of planning", we asked local government arts and culture leaders from across Aotearoa to imagine what our country might look like in 30 years if arts, culture and creativity were supported to ensure that every New Zealander can thrive. Then, we explored key actions that could help bring those dreams to life. We present five of those actions here.

We acknowledge and thank everyone who fed into this process, from big and small

councils across Aotearoa, including elected representatives, Mayors, arts and culture leads and Māori strategy leads.

The five key actions identified within this submission echo what we hear across the arts and culture sector. They are foundational in nature, and present significant opportunities to reimagine how we enable thriving communities, through delivery of arts, culture and creativity, for the benefit of all New Zealanders.

As the Future for Local Government Review panel reimagines the role and function of local government, we encourage you to centre arts, culture and creativity in your dreaming and planning. Through partnership and collaborative investment, we can build a sustainable arts and culture ecosystem that delivers enhanced wellbeing outcomes for our communities. If our arts and culture ecosystem thrives, everyone in Aotearoa benefits.

Creative New Zealand looks forward to continuing to work with the local government sector and supporting you in our shared ambitions.



**Stephen Wainwright**  
Chief Executive – Pou Whakarae  
Creative New Zealand Toi Aotearoa



**Caren Rangī ONZM**  
Manukura—Chair  
Arts Council of New Zealand Toi Aotearoa

# Brave action now will strengthen our cultural pou and enhance wellbeing.

The Future for Local Government Review Panel is looking to reimagine the role and function of local government, in order to build a sustainable system that delivers enhanced wellbeing outcomes for our communities.

“ To hold our cultural pou intact, we need to act now.

The five key shifts identified by the Panel present bold opportunities for local government to make genuine and meaningful contributions to our communities that will benefit our arts and culture ecosystem. When arts, creativity and culture are nourished, they provide powerful tools to foster resilience, dialogue and wellbeing.

1. Strengthened local democracy
2. Stronger focus on wellbeing
3. Authentic relationship with Hapū/Iwi Māori
4. Genuine partnerships between Central and local government; and
5. More equitable funding.

For this submission, Creative New Zealand and MartinJenkins co-designed and co-facilitated an extensive engagement process with local government representatives embedded in the arts, culture and creative sector, and local government kaupapa Māori specialists. We were mindful of inviting a range of participants to represent diverse geographical and cultural

viewpoints, from small and large councils, from cities and regions across the motu.

Our overarching question for discussion was: **What are the five things that we could do in a new local government setting that would have the most significant impact on arts, culture and creativity outcomes?**

We heard from 46 people via four online workshops and one-on-one interviews. Our participants were a mix of elected representatives, Mayors, arts and culture leads and Māori strategy leads – all employed by local government. After the initial information gathering period, we invited 10 participants back to a final workshop to test and prioritise the insights. We have aimed to fairly represent the views and visions of these people that generously gave their time.

It was apparent throughout our discussions, that local government is brimming with passionate, dedicated people who have aspirations for a future where arts, culture and creativity are able to be accessed by everybody, equally.

The vision that emerged was an Aotearoa that reflected Māori as tangata whenua, our place in the Pacific, and our diverse communities, and a government that prized the benefits that arts, culture and creativity bring to the wellbeing of our communities. We heard that local government must be situated as a key part of a wider ecosystem that interconnects diverse communities, Māori, hapū and iwi, business, education, and central government.

In order for arts and culture to most impactfully contribute to transformational wellbeing outcomes, there are foundational elements that need to be put in place. It was evident that an all-of-government approach that has cultural wellbeing at its heart is the most effective way to advance

this. The five key actions that surfaced from our engagement reflect the criticality of a complete system rethink.

To realise the transformative potential of arts, culture and creativity to our collective wellbeing, we need to:



KEY ACTIONS

## 01. ADVOCATE:

# Embed arts leadership in central and local government

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Dedicated arts leadership would allow arts-thinking to be integrated into political decision-making, regardless of changes in government.

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We heard that where councils didn't have specific arts and cultural champions internally, it was more difficult for arts, culture and creativity to get traction or consideration in council processes. Creating mechanisms for arts and cultural leadership and advocacy within the local government system, such as a Mayoral taskforce and dedicated roles in councils, could bolster the sector and provide more visibility of the wellbeing benefits of arts, culture and creativity.

We heard that key decision-makers must have a deeper understanding of the arts, culture and creative sector. At a central government level, a permanent Chief Arts Advisor would provide strategic and independent advice to the Prime Minister and Cabinet, and serve as an accessible conduit between the arts, culture and creative sector, the community, and the government. Our participants believed that all strategic governmental decisions can benefit from an arts, culture and creative lens.

By embedding arts leadership and advocacy in local and central government, we correctly

position arts, culture and creativity as a valuable and essential tool in prioritising the wellbeing of our communities.



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Right: Three Star Nation. Photograph by Raymond Sagapolutele.



“ Arts and culture is a lens, rather than a portfolio – we are working on the same outcomes together.

“ Art is at the centre of solving big challenging issues like climate change.

“ Collaborate with neighbouring councils – share resources and people to actively build capacity and create stunning environments.

“ We need greater diversity and representation in our governance and management structures, with our elected members, on the governing boards of cultural organisations, and within council arts staff. Representation here in our Senior Executive Teams means we are automatically filtering the arts and culture outcomes, treaty obligations, access and inclusion into all our reporting.

“ Mindsets are changed from the top. It's harder to do it from the ground up.

KEY ACTIONS

## 02. ELEVATE: Reflect Te Tiriti in the organisation and management of arts and culture

Dedicated funding and strategic leadership of ngā toi Māori would support capacity building and elevate Māori arts, culture and creativity initiatives.

Dedicated funding and other capacity building resources could support Māori to more fully participate in, and have a stronger voice in local government arts and culture planning at the inception stage. Ngā toi Māori is unique to Aotearoa, and strategic partnerships could build a future where ngā toi Māori practice, both customary and contemporary, are visible, well-resourced and thriving. We heard that Māori culture, history, mātauranga and te reo Māori could be more consistently represented and visible in our cities and towns.

“ A nation where local, iwi and hapū stories are part of the social fabric, not just pulled out occasionally in a book or mural, but the heart of who we aspire to be. Knowing whose whenua we are on.

Participating in arts, culture, and creativity is seen as a valued and fundamental part of wellbeing in te ao Māori, rather than an add-on, but we heard that Māori, and particularly rangatahi, were often unable to participate in events because of the cost or distance to travel. Māori would benefit from equitable access to resources to support their own objectives and tell their own stories, in the localities of their choice. In particular, involvement in kapahaka has proven links to improved wellbeing for Māori, by affirming identity and enhancing hauora, and deserves equitable investment.





“ Arts and culture are seen as an add-on. Prioritisation would be different if the conversation is with iwi.

“ Article 2 talks about protection and tino rangatiratanga over taonga, and arts and culture are taonga.

“ Seeing the reflection of tangata whenua in all places, not just Rotorua – actual living representation.

“ Arts and culture would be a higher priority if you are talking to iwi.

## KEY ACTIONS

## 03. PLAN:

# Develop a national strategy for arts, culture and creativity

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A national strategy will provide guidance, stability, and cohesion for local government to purposefully support our arts, cultural and creative communities.

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We heard that aligning with a central government strategy and direction would provide a connection point for local government to 'plug into' and, that, for some, it would be a starting point for their own arts, culture and creativity strategies. This could be spearheaded by a vision statement, so that there is clear and consistent messaging of our aspirations for arts, culture and creativity as a country.

A national strategy would outline a long-term approach to the arts, culture and creativity sectors, enabling informed decision-making and targeted investment, and amplifying the role of arts, culture and creativity in improving wellbeing. We heard that it was important for any strategy to include an implementation pathway, with an equity lens, and an outcomes-based approach with defined actions and accountabilities.

It is vital to councils that a national strategy account for the regional differences and cultural ecosystems that make up Aotearoa. Engagement would be needed with regional and national arts organisations, Māori, Pasifika and other ethnic groups, and business. It would be essential to develop a strategy that is informed by arts-thinking and the needs and aspirations of those who will benefit from it.

“ *The impact of the pandemic and no strategy ... it's been like a garden that we've been nurturing and then frost comes.* ”

Partnerships are a crucial consideration, and resourcing could be delivered in partnership with local government and Māori, with a governance platform to connect key communities.

We heard that some of the smaller councils would like to be equipped with funding and capabilities to develop their own localised



strategies. There was a preference for investment and resource to come from central government, with outcomes informed by the organisations on the ground delivering arts and cultural experiences.

“ We need to have a conversation on how arts and culture are funded; it can't be from activity that destroys the community it is trying to serve.

“ There is no visible national vision. I don't really have a sense of what the national direction is.

“ We all know the funding system is not equitable. We just pitch the sector against itself.

“ Government could encourage corporate philanthropy and investment in art through tax changes.

## 04. RESEARCH:

# Create a national data strategy to collect, measure, evidence, and demonstrate the value of arts, culture and creativity

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A well-resourced, national approach to collecting and analysing arts and culture data, that includes a dedicated research focus, would give us the foundation to evaluate the true impact of arts and culture and effectively tell a value story to our communities, and our nation.

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We need to build on existing pockets of research, define what the value and impact of arts, culture and creativity is, and explore how to measure it within a wellbeing framework. Data collection and analyses should be connected to the national strategy and guided by a select committee and moderators that includes representation across local government, central government, regional and national arts organisations, Māori, Pasifika and other ethnic groups.

Data could be collected both locally and centrally using agreed measurement tools and frameworks, and proactively funded to provide wellbeing data that is specific to Aotearoa. Targeted funding that builds on our existing research into the intersections of arts, culture, creativity and wellbeing will strengthen our

understanding of its significance and value (and likely increase funding streams, as evidence shows how interconnected they are).

“ We have to stop seeing investment in the arts sector as a cost. It’s a social investment individually and regionally in our wellbeing.

It is important too, to invest in creating narratives and awareness campaigns that tell the story of how critical arts and culture are to our wellbeing; that arts, culture and creativity are an essential part of who we are and how we stay healthy, connected and thriving as people, and as communities. Research and storytelling will show that arts, culture and creativity can



be used as a tool to build community resilience, pride of place, diversity and inclusion; they are a proven vehicle for achieving wellbeing targets in Aotearoa.

“ *The pandemic has exposed how poorly we tell our story with data.* ”

“ *We need the data points so we can see clearly where the benefit of arts and culture flows.* ”

Above: Jess Johnson and Simon Ward, Terminus, 2021, The Dowse. Photography by Mark Tantrum.

## 05. PARTNER:

# Improve knowledge and resource distribution by investing in regional and national collaboration and partnership

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For arts and culture to be accessible for all people in Aotearoa, regardless of where we live, the arts, culture and creative ecosystem needs to be cooperative, focused and resilient.

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We heard that we could strengthen the foundation of this system by instilling a culture of partnership within local government. Some suggested partnership pathways were:

- an accord between local government and central government
- formal collaboration between councils
- partnerships with iwi and hapu Māori
- partnerships with artists, cultural and creative practitioners, and
- agreements with businesses.

A joined-up system will strengthen itself through these connections.

We can learn from councils who have had experience with arts advocates being involved in council planning from the inception phase, from those who have trialled mandating an arts and culture spend on all projects, and from councils who have their own honed arts and culture strategies. An arts system improvement fund could be available for all councils to connect into for guidance, mentoring, and collaboration opportunities with other councils. We could encourage the



sharing of arts investment models and ideas to improve the social, economic, environmental and cultural wellbeing of our communities and consider how other sectors, such as sports, encourage successful investment. Ensuring

that arts, cultural and creative practitioners are involved in the co-design and development of this system improvement will be a key factor in its success.



“ We need to create a hyper-localised arts and culture approach to really impact wellbeing.

“ The skills needed in councils in the future will be less content and programme development, and more about enabling and empowering.

“ There’s an opportunity to think about long-term investment in people rather than projects. Councils require competency to truly support the artists they are working with.

“ How can we collectively invest in people more, rather than projects and buildings?



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### Contact us

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### Disclaimer

The five actions outlined in the submission are the outcome of an extensive engagement process, and do not necessarily represent the view of any particular individual or organisation.

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### Acknowledgements

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