

***Tū Mai Rā, Toi Aotearoa***  
**Creative New Zealand's draft long-term strategy**  
**Summary of Engagement**

**May 2025**

*Tū Mai Rā, Toi Aotearoa, ki te ao hurihuri,  
hahana atu, whakaniko tōku whare kōrero*  
*Stand proudly, Toi Aotearoa in this ever-changing world,  
blaze the pathway, beautify my house of dialogue*  
(Excerpt from *Tū Mai Rā, Toi Aotearoa waiata*)

**Introduction**

In March and April 2025, Creative New Zealand sought arts community and public views on our draft long-term strategy to 2040, *Tū Mai Rā, Toi Aotearoa*. This document summarises the feedback we received.

We'd like to thank all those who responded to the survey, took part in online information sessions and provided written feedback and submissions. Your feedback will inform and shape our strategy and help us as we deliver to it.

We expect to release *Tū Mai Rā, Toi Aotearoa* later this year, when our new Chief Executive has had time to support the Arts Council to finalise its strategic work.

Releasing our new strategy later in the year will also enable us to reflect the strategic direction set by government through *Amplify: A Creative and Cultural Strategy for New Zealand*.

The feedback we received included strong support for the draft strategy's proposed vision – The arts and ngā toi Māori are flourishing: created by a thriving arts community, enriching lives here and around the world.

We also received strong support, and largely positive feedback, for our proposed long-term goals. This has helped inform our strategic intentions, which are set out in our forthcoming Statement of Intent 2025–2030 and Statement of Performance Expectations for 2025/26 (our annual plan). We may update these strategic intentions once the strategy itself is finalised.

Our strategy will help ensure we're set up to achieve our vision and goals, with a new approach: one that puts our commitment to Te Tiriti o Waitangi into action and supports the significant changes we've started, in terms of what we do and how we do it. This includes changing how we support arts organisations and groups, and giving communities more power to make decisions about the arts and ngā toi Māori that matter most to them.

## Summary of key findings

This report summarises feedback received on the proposed vision and five long-term goals included in Creative New Zealand's draft 15-year strategy, [\*Tū Mai Rā, Toi Aotearoa\*](#).

**Proposed vision:** The arts and ngā toi are flourishing: created by an empowered arts community, sought after globally and enriching all our lives.

### Proposed goals:

- **Empowered communities**, making decisions on the arts and ngā toi closest to them, from a bigger support base.
- **Thriving artists, ringatoi and practitioners**, with viable creative careers, supported by a healthy arts infrastructure.
- **He mana toi, he mana tangata** – thriving and highly visible ngā toi Māori, valued in Aotearoa and around the world.
- **Inspired New Zealanders**, embracing the arts and ngā toi every day.
- **A valued arts development agency**, leading with impact and delivering for Aotearoa New Zealand.

Sector and community feedback indicated a high-level of support for the proposed vision and goals.

- **Vision:** 84 percent of respondents strongly supported or supported (134 respondents) the proposed vision.
- **Goals:** the following percentage of respondents strongly supported or supported each goal.
  - **Empowered communities:** 79 percent support (109 respondents).
  - **Thriving artists, ringatoi and practitioners:** 93 percent support (127 respondents).

- **He mana toi, he mana tangata:** 86 percent support (113 respondents).
- **Inspired New Zealanders:** 86 percent support (114 respondents).
- **A valued arts development agency:** 79 percent support (101 respondents).

## Feedback on the proposed vision

### The arts and ngā toi are flourishing: created by an empowered arts community, sought after globally and enriching all our lives

The key points raised by the 80 respondents who commented on the **vision** are summarised below.

- **General support:** Many respondents expressed strong support for the vision, appreciating its focus on empowering the arts community and fostering creativity to enrich lives locally, nationally and internationally. There were requests for more detailed information on how the vision will be implemented and what it will mean tangibly for arts communities.
- **Accessibility and inclusion:** Concerns were raised about the need for greater inclusivity of Deaf and disabled and culturally diverse communities included in the vision.
- **Global vs local focus:** Several respondents were concerned about the emphasis on being ‘sought after globally’, suggesting that local enrichment and support should be prioritised.
- **Clarity and measurability:** Calls for more strategic clarity and measurable outcomes, to ensure the vision is actionable and not just aspirational.
- **Terminology:** Some respondents found terms like ‘empowered’ to be overused and suggested more specific language that reflects tangible support and resources.
- **Financial support:** Highlighting the need for sufficient resources and financial stability for artists to thrive, not just survive.
- **Audience engagement:** The importance of recognising audiences as key partners in the arts ecosystem was stressed, ensuring their engagement and participation are central to the vision.

## Feedback on the proposed goals

### *Goals in ranked order of importance*

Respondents were asked to rank the five goals in order of importance to them. The results from highest-ranked importance to lowest-ranked importance were as follows.

- **Thriving artists, ringatoi and practitioners**
- **He mana toi, he mana tangata**
- **Empowered communities**
- **Inspired New Zealanders**
- **A valued arts development agency**

### *High-level comments on the proposed goals*

- **Request for clarity on implementation of the strategy:** Calls for more detailed plans on how the vision and goals will be achieved, including specific actions, measurable outcomes, examples of how the goals will be delivered and accountability mechanisms.
- **Inclusivity and equity:** Calls to ensure that Māori, Pacific, Asian, Deaf and disabled, and rainbow communities are included and supported in the strategy and decision making. Request for more explicit commitments to equity, diversity and inclusion. Request for greater support for community arts and recognition of the role of volunteers and community leaders in the arts ecosystem.
- **Terms and definitions:** Request for definitions to be provided for terms such as ‘community’, ‘viable careers’, ‘healthy infrastructure’ and ‘support base’, as well as ‘artist’, ‘practitioner’ and the arts Creative New Zealand supports, to better understand what is meant by each term.
- **Perceived imbalance:** Concerns that the goals may lack balance across artforms and New Zealand’s demographic, with insufficient consideration of operational realities and funding ecosystems.
- **Te Tiriti o Waitangi:** Support for explicitly referencing Creative New Zealand’s role in upholding and giving effect to Te Tiriti o Waitangi across all goals and embedding Te Tiriti in the strategy.

- **Sustainable careers:** Emphasis on the need for sustainable careers for artists, including long-term investment and support for career planning and professional development.
- **Pacific arts:** Need to be integral and recognised in the strategy to reflect Pacific contributions to New Zealand's identity and place, and to recognise the successful models, relationships and approaches that have driven tangible positive change and impact for artists and communities.
- **Arts education:** Emphasis on the importance of arts education in schools and the need for collaboration with the Ministry of Education to develop comprehensive arts education programmes to ensure a pipeline of artists, creators, and audiences.
- **Audience engagement:** Suggestions to elevate the role of audiences as cultural participants and financial partners, ensuring greater accessibility and engagement.
- **International strategy:** Suggestions for a clear international strategy to position Aotearoa New Zealand artists as global leaders and foster export, exchange, and touring opportunities.
- **Advocacy and collaboration:** Emphasis on the need for Creative New Zealand to play a strong advocacy role – fostering a nation that understands and values arts and ngā toi Māori, collaborating with other government entities, and building partnerships to support the arts and ngā toi sector.

#### *Detailed feedback on the proposed goals*

**Empowered communities**, making decisions on the arts and ngā toi closest to them, from a bigger support base

Key points raised by 81 respondents who commented on the **Empowered communities** goal are summarised below.

- **General support:** Many respondents supported the idea of empowering communities to make decisions about the arts and ngā toi closest to them.
- **Decentralised decision-making:** Positive reception towards decentralising decision-making, allowing local communities to have more control over arts funding and initiatives.

- **Support and resources:** Emphasis on the need for ongoing support, training and resources to accompany empowerment. Concerns about whether communities will have the necessary capacity and resources, noting varying capacity and capability across regions and governance, and to ensure diverse communities are included in decision-making processes.
- **Risk of inconsistency:** Concerns about potential inconsistencies in support across different regions and the risk of small groups ‘hijacking’ agendas.
- **Potential burden:** Concerns that devolving decision-making might pass the burden onto communities without providing adequate support, leading to burnout and inefficiencies.
- **Role of Creative New Zealand:** Questions about how Creative New Zealand will balance its leadership role with empowering communities, ensuring that the organisation continues to fulfill its statutory responsibilities.
- **Financial stability:** Highlighting the need for financial stability and sufficient funding to support local decision-making and ensure sustainable outcomes.
- **Community definition:** Requests for a clearer definition of what constitutes a ‘community’ and how different types of communities (geographic, cultural, demographic) will be recognised and supported.
- **Partnerships and networks:** Recommendations for Creative New Zealand to form partnerships with local decision-making groups and to connect these groups through a supported network, to strengthen relationships and improve practices.

**Thriving artists, ringatoi and practitioners**, with viable creative careers, supported by a healthy arts infrastructure

Key points raised by 71 respondents who commented on the **Thriving artists, ringatoi and practitioners** goal are summarised below.

- **General support:** Many respondents agreed that supporting artists to thrive is essential for a vibrant arts sector.
- **Sustainable careers:** Emphasis on the need for sustainable careers, including fair pay, long-term investment and stable employment opportunities.

- **Funding and resources:** Concerns about the scarcity of funding and the need for increased investment to support artists and practitioners adequately.
- **Role of Creative New Zealand:** Questions about how Creative New Zealand will balance supporting individual artists versus broader arts infrastructure.
- **Realistic expectations:** Concerns that the goal may be overly ambitious given current funding constraints and the economic realities facing artists.
- **Artist wellbeing:** Emphasis on the importance of artist wellbeing, including mental health and work-life balance.
- **Cross-government approach:** Suggestions for a cross-government approach to increase employment opportunities for artists beyond the arts sector.
- **Infrastructure and support systems:** Highlighting the importance of a healthy arts infrastructure, including venues, training and support systems for artists.
- **Community and volunteer support:** Recognising the role of community-based and volunteer-driven organisations in supporting the arts ecosystem.

**He mana toi, he mana tangata** – thriving and highly visible ngā toi Māori, valued in Aotearoa and around the world

Key points raised by 64 respondents who commented on the **He mana toi, he mana tangata** goal are summarised below.

- **General support:** Many respondents strongly supported the goal of promoting and developing ngā toi Māori, recognising its importance in shaping our national identity and cultural heritage.
- **Te Tiriti o Waitangi:** Emphasis on the need to uphold Te Tiriti o Waitangi obligations by actively promoting and supporting ngā toi Māori.
- **Clarity and implementation:** Calls for more detailed information on how the strategy will achieve thriving and visible ngā toi Māori, including specific actions and measurable outcomes.

- **Inclusivity:** Feedback requesting balanced support for ngā toi Māori and other cultural and ethnic arts communities, such as Pacific, Asian and LGBTQIA+ arts.
- **Strengthening iwi-based groups:** Suggestions to strengthen and enable iwi-based groups to extend their reach and support for art-making.
- **New goals and wording:** Proposals to add new goals, such as growing Treaty-based relationships with hapū and iwi and using alternative wording like ‘sought after’ or ‘treasured’ instead of ‘valued’.
- **Potential imbalance:** Some respondents felt that the focus on ngā toi Māori might overshadow other important cultural arts communities, leading to sector disharmony.
- **Global recognition:** Recognition of the potential for ngā toi Māori to enhance New Zealand’s international reputation, but with caution against commodifying Māori arts for tourism.
- **Intergenerational knowledge sharing:** Emphasis on supporting initiatives that connect emerging artists with established practitioners.
- **Cultural and intellectual property:** Importance of addressing issues related to intellectual property and avoiding misappropriation of mātauranga Māori.

### **Inspired New Zealanders**, embracing the arts and ngā toi every day

Key points raised by 58 respondents who commented on the **Inspired New Zealanders** goal are summarised below.

- **General support:** Many respondents agreed that inspiring New Zealanders to embrace the arts and ngā toi Māori as part of their daily lives is a valuable goal.
- **Cultural connection:** Emphasis on the importance of arts in creating a vibrant, culturally connected society that values creativity in all its forms.
- **Arts in education:** Calls for better arts education in schools in primary and secondary education.
- **Quality:** Arts and ngā toi need to be of high quality for New Zealanders to be inspired by them.



- **Public spaces and infrastructure:** Suggestions to integrate the arts into public spaces and societal infrastructure, making art a visible and normal part of everyday life.
- **Community engagement:** Emphasis on fostering support from diverse industries and communities to promote direct engagement and participation in the arts.
- **Systemic barriers:** Concerns that the goal does not address how systemic barriers (eg, financial, geographic, cultural) to arts engagement will be dismantled.
- **Audience development:** Importance of developing strategies to increase audience engagement and participation in arts events, addressing barriers to access and inclusion.
- **Economic and social value:** Promoting narratives that recognise the arts and ngā toi as essential contributors to society, not just as hobbies or entertainment.

**A valued arts development agency**, leading with impact and delivering for Aotearoa New Zealand

Key points raised by 72 respondents who commented on the **A valued arts development agency** goal are summarised below.

- **General support:** Many respondents agree that having a valued arts development agency is crucial for driving meaningful change and providing strategic support to the arts sector. Some respondents questioned why a goal about the organisation is included in the strategy. A good number of comments were supportive of Creative New Zealand directly, rather than supporting this goal specifically.
- **Advocacy and leadership:** Emphasis on the importance of Creative New Zealand's role in advocating for the arts and leading with impact, both nationally and internationally.
- **Terminology:** Suggestions to use terms like 'effective' or 'trusted' instead of 'valued', to emphasise impact and trustworthiness.
- **Capability development:** Highlighting the need for Creative New Zealand to invest in capability development, resources and guidance for community organisations to navigate legislation, Te Tiriti obligations and governance issues.

- **International strategy:** Suggestions for Creative New Zealand to develop an international strategy, to help New Zealand-based creatives represent on the world stage.
- **Collaboration and partnerships:** Emphasis on the importance of collaborating with other government entities, councils and diverse industries to ‘mainstream’ the arts into everyday life.
- **Perceived disconnect:** Concerns that the goal may imply we are not currently valued, which some respondents feel is not true based on their experiences.
- **Te Tiriti o Waitangi:** Importance of explicitly referencing our role in upholding and giving effect to Te Tiriti o Waitangi.
- **Trust and transparency:** Emphasis on building trust with the sector and ensuring transparency in funding processes and decision-making.
- **Advocacy:** Calls for Creative New Zealand to actively advocate for increased funding, diversified income streams and private giving to support the arts sector.
- **Artist-centered approach:** Ensuring that Creative New Zealand places the sustainability and autonomy of artists at the heart of decision-making, with a strong focus on Māori and Pacific creatives.

### **Additional comments provided**

Fifty respondents provided additional comments, which are broadly reflected or repeated in comments noted in this report.

### **Background**

Creative New Zealand’s draft 15-year strategy, [\*Tū Mai Rā, Toi Aotearoa\*](#), was released on 17 March 2025, with the arts community and public engagement period running until 6 April 2025.

Feedback on the draft strategy was received through:

- an **online survey** – 142 responses
- **emailed comments and submissions** – 18 responses
- **five online information sessions** (held 19–27 March) – two general sessions (with NZ Sign Language translation), and three with a focus on Māori, Pacific and Asian communities respectively

- **meetings with key stakeholder groups**, including Manga Tipua Deaf and disabled Leadership Rōpū (held 21 March), Regional Arts Network Aotearoa (held 3 April) and Te Rōpū Mana Toi arts advocacy advisory group (held 4 April).

Survey respondents had the following connection with Creative New Zealand:

- 31 percent were individuals that apply for funding
- 19 percent were from the wider arts sector
- 17 percent were responding on behalf of an organisation, collective or group that applies for funding
- 15 percent were on behalf of organisations receiving funding through the Toi Tōtara Haemata or Toi Uru Kahikatea Investment programmes
- 11 percent selected ‘Other’, such as respondents from local authorities distributing funding through the Creative Communities Scheme, arts workers, volunteers for arts organisations, etc
- 4 percent were interested members of the public
- 3 percent were on behalf of an organisation that has a relationship with Creative New Zealand that doesn’t involve applying for funding.

Information provided in survey responses and submissions is held in accordance with Creative New Zealand’s [Privacy Policy](#).

Microsoft CoPilot AI was used to analyse open-ended survey questions. The AI output and comments were reviewed by Creative New Zealand for accuracy.