



# Art, culture and creativity: Part of your community's future

## Ngā taonga toi: He hāpori mauroa

A resource for local government

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**Councils are the ultimate enablers of massive impact when they invest in local festivals and events. We bring you big bang for buck! Gathering to celebrate, share ideas, create connections, and open-up new worlds is what makes a city and region burst with energy.**

**Steph Walker**

Executive Director, WORD Christchurch

**Illustration inspired by**

Summer Arts Festival, Whakatāne



# Poipoia te kākano kia puāwai

## Nurture the seed and it will bloom

Every town and city across Aotearoa New Zealand has its own creative heartbeat. From music and murals to festivals, galleries, libraries, community centres and marae, creativity shapes how our places look, sound and feel. We all want our communities to be vibrant places that people are proud to call home.

**This resource has been created to support you in your local government role**, to help you make confident, informed and strategic decisions about local investment in art, culture, creativity and ngā toi Māori (Māori art).



## Art and culture are foundational community services that shape how people live, connect and feel about where they belong

Councils around the country are facing significant pressures. Tight budgets and growing community expectations mean every dollar must deliver real value.

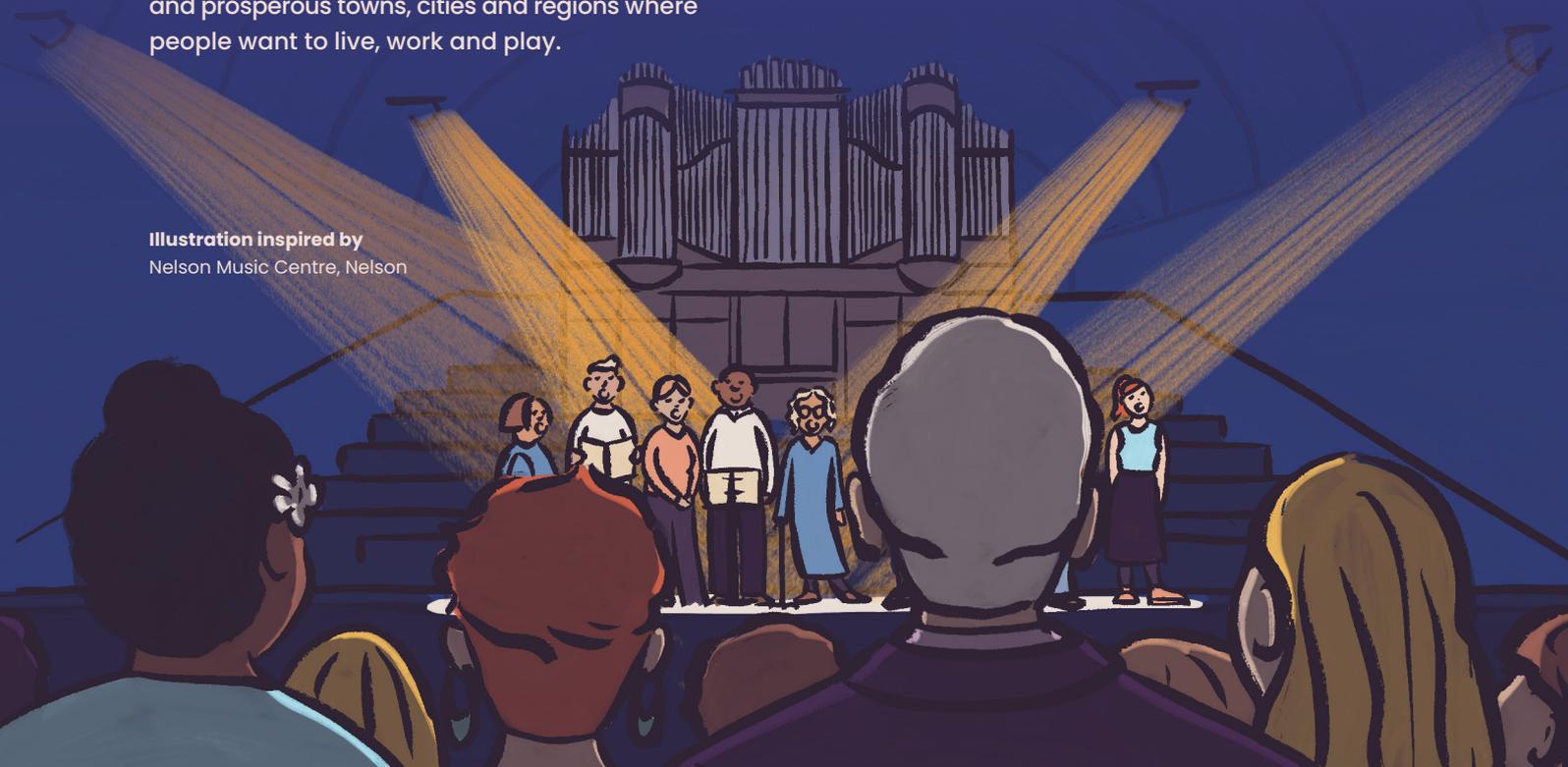
Art, culture and creativity are part of the solution: they deliver lasting social, cultural and economic benefits. They encourage people to visit and even move to your region. Art, ngā toi Māori and creativity build stronger, more connected communities, creating vibrant and prosperous towns, cities and regions where people want to live, work and play.

Illustration inspired by  
Nelson Music Centre, Nelson

## Art and culture are an important part of core services

Core services delivered by Councils include libraries, galleries and recreational facilities. All these services make an important contribution to your communities.

This resource is here to help you champion your contribution to art, culture, creativity and ngā toi Māori, to make the case for continued support, and to celebrate the role councils play in shaping creative, thriving places across Aotearoa New Zealand.



# Here are some of the ways your council supports art, culture, creativity and ngā toi Māori

Maintaining and building on this support will help unlock economic and social benefits.



## COMMUNITY HALLS, THEATRES AND VENUES

These are important community facilities for people to gather, rehearse and participate in community choirs, dance and theatre groups, craft and book markets, and experience local and touring performances.



## PUBLIC ART

Public art enhances public spaces and residents' sense of place, telling the history and stories of mana whenua and your community's unique identity.



## LIBRARIES, MUSEUMS AND GALLERIES

These core services are places for people to gather, work, play, learn and access information and learning programmes. Galleries and museums are kaitiaki of your community's art collection.



## EVENTS AND FESTIVALS

Events and festivals activate public spaces and venues, bringing towns and cities to life and boosting local businesses and tourism.



## MARAE

Working with and supporting marae preservation and development as key cultural centres for whānau, hapū, iwi and the wider community.



## REGULATION

Regulation guides the use of public space for events and festivals, urban design, the display of creative work, and permission to make noise!

# Key benefits of investing in art, culture, creativity and ngā toi Māori

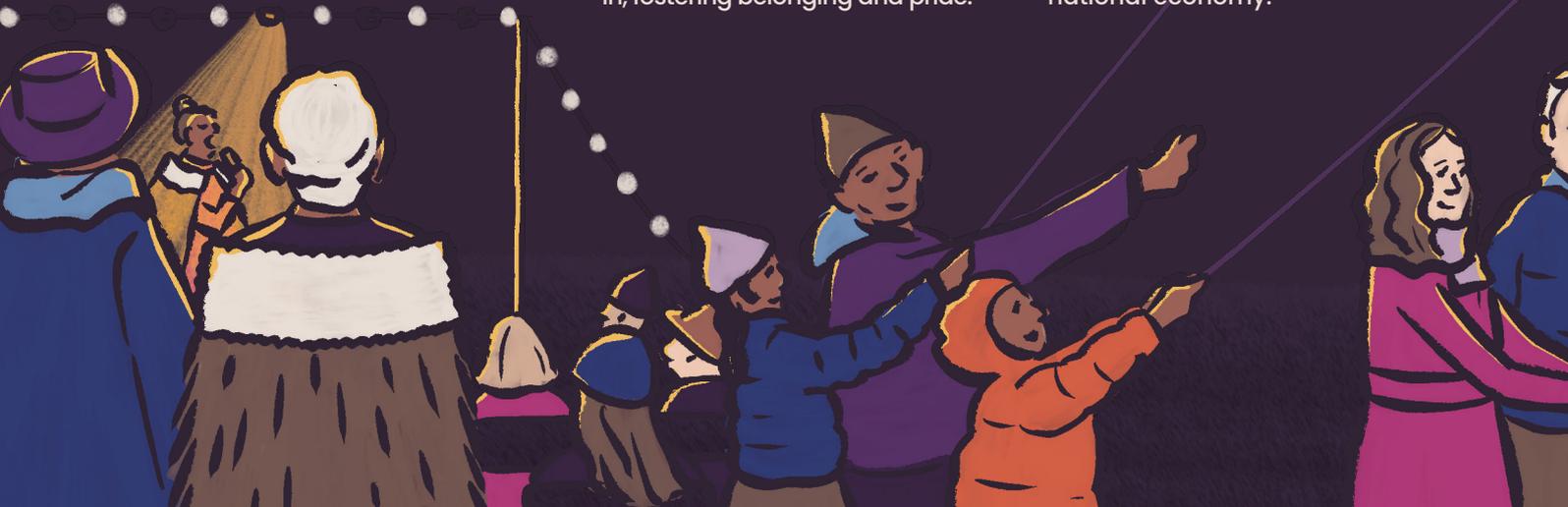
**Supporting arts and culture in your region delivers social, cultural, environmental and economic benefits**

**Support community connection**

Art, creativity and ngā toi Māori connect people across generations and backgrounds which creates greater understanding between communities. From local festivals to murals, music and storytelling, they help communities celebrate who they are and the area they live in, fostering belonging and pride.

**Grow local economies**

Art, culture, creativity and ngā toi Māori create jobs, support local businesses, and drive tourism. Arts organisations, venues and festivals boost spending in hospitality, retail, and accommodation, while creative industries themselves contribute billions to our national economy.



## Boost environmental awareness

Art, culture, creativity and ngā toi Māori create places that people value and want to care for. They deepen connection to nature through stories and knowledge of unique local whenua and waters, and highlight our place in the Pacific. The arts and ngā toi Māori help communities understand and respond to complex issues like climate change.

## Build social resilience

Art, culture, creativity and ngā toi Māori support people during challenging times and help them make sense of change. Whether revitalising town centres, transforming public spaces or bringing communities together after a natural disaster, art and culture help people reconnect and support good mental health outcomes.

## Spark innovation and learning

Creative practice encourages imagination, problem-solving and confidence. For young people, arts participation grows skills for life. For communities, it fuels collaboration around what's possible and encourages people to look to the future with optimism.

Illustration inspired by  
Matariki celebrations in Queenstown



# Helpful facts for Councillors

## The arts add \$17.5 billion into the economy

In 2024, the arts and creative sector in Aotearoa New Zealand contributed \$17.5 billion to the economy. That's 4.2% of our total GDP.

(Infometrics, 2025)

## \$3.20 return on every \$1 spent

Investment in art and culture is a multiplier. For every \$1 spent on live performance \$3.20 is returned in benefits to the wider community.

(Massey University, University of Canterbury, 2024)

## Income for creative professionals is low

The median income for creative professionals is just \$37,000 from creative work, well below the national median of \$61,000.

(Creative New Zealand, NZ On Air, 2022)

**Illustration inspired by**  
Public murals in Kerikeri

## Local councils collectively invest \$500–\$600 million each year

Combined, local councils invest between \$500 and \$600 million in arts and culture each year. This investment is supported by New Zealanders:

**62%** 62% of New Zealanders think that the arts should receive public funding.

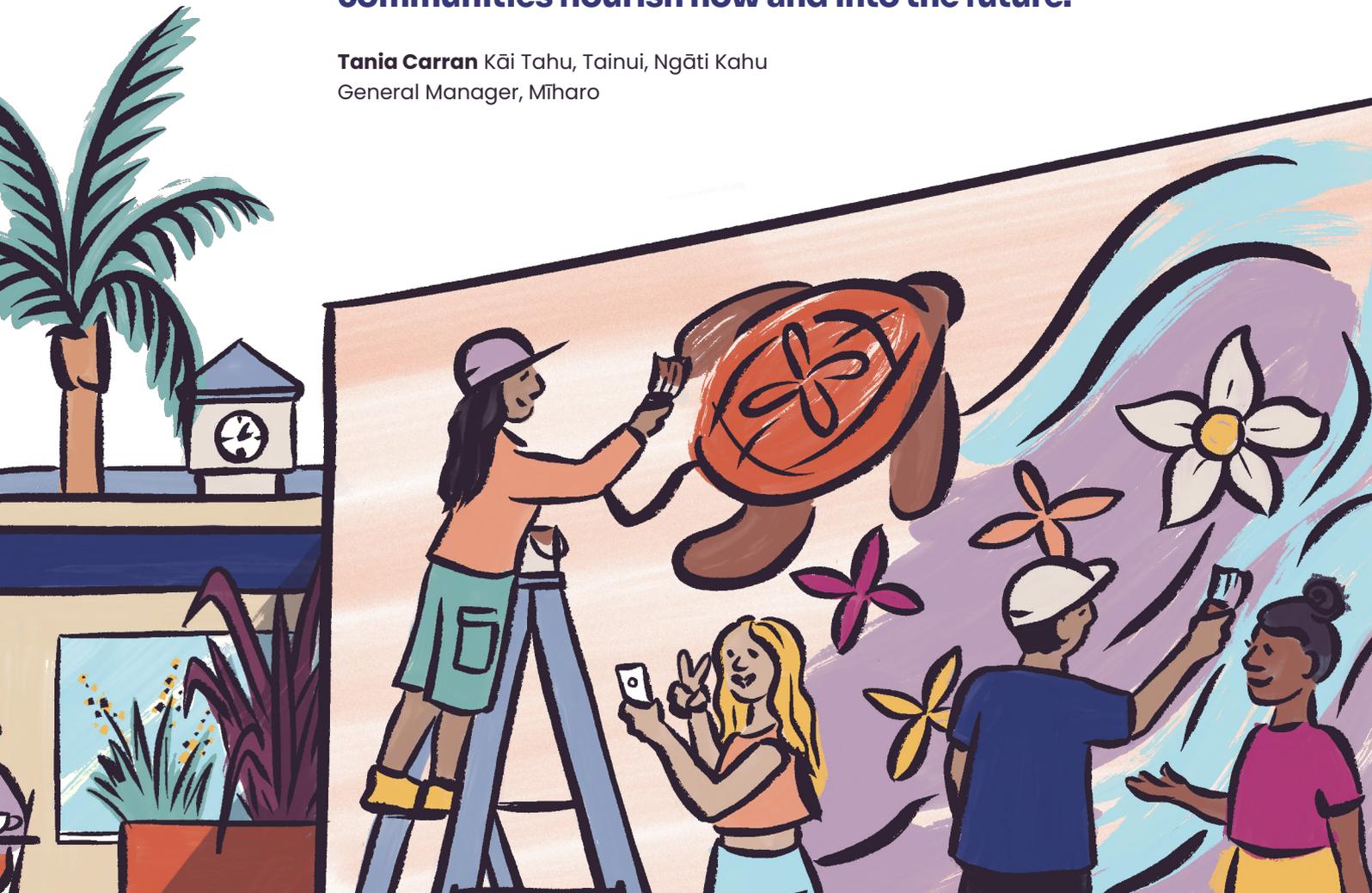
**67%** 67% of New Zealanders agree that arts facilities are important to create a vibrant place to live.

(Creative New Zealand, 2023)



“ Investing in creative pathways for our rangatahi strengthens cultural revitalisation and supports vibrant, resilient towns. Rangatahi programmes bring people together, revitalise local spaces and grow future leaders. This mahi ensures our communities flourish now and into the future.

**Tania Carran** Kāi Tahu, Tainui, Ngāti Kahu  
General Manager, Mīharo



# Take these practical steps to support art, culture and ngā toi Māori in your community

## Include art, culture and ngā toi Māori in your annual and long-term plans

Include community outcomes for art, culture and creativity in your annual and long-term plans. Consider increasing funding for these core services over each year of your long-term plan.

## Ensure your Council's arts and culture strategy is working well

Work with arts community members to review or create your arts and culture strategy. They can also help you implement it. Do a stocktake to see which arts groups aren't being supported and see if you can address any gaps.

**Illustration inspired by**  
Te Ara Pekapeka Bridge, Hamilton



## Implement policies that weave art and ngā toi Māori through your infrastructure

Consider adopting a policy that requires infrastructure projects to include a 'percentage for art' or design elements in things like walkways, bus stops and bridges. For the best result, bring artists into the planning from the outset, not as an add-on at the end.

## Reflect diverse communities in decision-making, including the Creative Communities Scheme

Check that your Creative Communities Scheme committee reflects the diversity of the people in your area. Ensure representation from Māori, Pacific, Asian, d/Deaf and disability communities.



## Support ngā toi Māori in your community

Work with mana whenua and Māori artists and arts organisations to identify opportunities to support and invest in ngā toi Māori. Ensure Māori representation on public art and events advisory and decision-making panels.

**Illustration inspired by**  
*Kaitiaki*, by Fred Graham, Auckland  
(and Auckland Museum in the background)

## Make creative spaces accessible and affordable

Think about which council-owned venues and spaces you could make available to your arts communities to use free of charge or at reduced rates for rehearsing, developing and presenting work. Consider providing dedicated spaces for the Māori and Pasifika artists in your community.



**“ Art, culture and creativity should be accessible by all people in all communities. Sustained regional investment is vital for supporting the development of spaces and people to ensure that local stories are being shared. Creative organisations positively contribute to social cohesion and community wellbeing.**

**Dr Jeremy Mayall**  
Chief Executive, Creative Waikato

**“ Art, culture and creativity play a vital role in the economic vitality of regional communities. They bring people into our city centres, support local jobs and businesses, and turn public spaces into exciting places people want to spend time. Investment in creative activity builds skills, supports enterprise, and delivers lasting economic and social value for cities and regions alike.**

**Megan Peacock Coyle**  
Head of Venues & City Culture, Napier City Council

# How to be an advocate for creativity in your community

## Be a visible champion

You don't need to be an expert to show your support. Talk about the value of art, ngā toi Māori and creativity in council meetings, in the media and at community events. Remind people that arts and culture in your community are services that deliver significant economic, social and cultural impact.

**Illustration inspired by**  
Left Bank Art Gallery, Greymouth



## Back people and places

Support stable investment in the cultural infrastructure in your town. Continue to support local venues, festivals, galleries and community arts spaces and the artists who bring them to life. Think about creative and cultural infrastructure as foundational assets that deliver social connection and local vibrancy.

## Engage with your local creative community

Invite input from artists, arts practitioners and arts organisations from diverse communities into your planning through workshops, surveys or engaging with your regional arts development organisation (if you have one). Their ideas can help shape policies, strategies and events to ensure these are accessible, relevant, responsive to community need and reflect your district's unique identity.

## Recognise the impact

The creative sector delivers major social and economic returns. When you fund art and culture the benefits ripple out into communities and boost local businesses. Supporting art, culture, creativity and ngā toi Māori in your town is a smart, proven investment in the health, connection and future of your community.





# Help your community thrive

**Make art, creativity  
and ngā toi Māori part  
of your long-term vision**



ARTS COUNCIL OF NEW ZEALAND TOI AOTEAROA

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