

2022-23 Annual Report



Annual Report

2022-2023

Kia ora e te whanau,

It is with pleasure that we provide this report on our activity over the past year. During this period we crossed the milestone of 10 years of activity with yet another unprecedented year - but one that was still led by a steadfast commitment to arts, culture and creativity as a cornerstone of a thriving Waikato region. This was another year where we delivered meaningful work with people in our local communities, developed innovative new projects and initiatives and it enabled us to continue to solidify our reputation as a high profile, creative, innovative, passionate, and effective regional arts organisation.

We have continued to recognise the consistent period of change and uncertainty in our sector and wider community. With this in mind, we remain cognisant of the need to be proactive in our support and advocacy for the needs of our community. This is driven by our understanding of the importance of arts, culture and creativity as a mechanism for wellbeing within our communities in the Waikato and beyond. There are important discussions taking place at local, regional and national levels around how arts, culture and creativity become more fundamental components of our lives and our communities, and it is exciting for Creative Waikato to continue to play a leading role in these discussions.

The Creative Waikato team has continued to deliver our core work alongside some additional projects supported by the Ministry of Culture and Heritage and the Ministry of Social Development. This enabled us to grow our organisational capacity over the short-term to expand our reach and impact. These projects have been structured so they are in line with our core strategy and vision and provide pathways for expanding our impact within the region, rather than diverting our focus.

We have continued to deliver our core business of serving the communities of the Waikato Region to elevate the role and understanding of creativity within our region and support opportunities for culture wellbeing. A substantial part of the connection between our core work, our strategic vision and our connection with the community is through the Waikato Arts Navigator.

This regional arts strategy continues to guide our work in the wider Waikato region. This has seen engagement with all 10 councils in the region, with some taking further steps towards implementation of council specific action plans. As before, this collaborative approach to strategy is unlike other regions of Aotearoa, and so through the implementation of this we have a chance to again set a precedent for the role and value of arts, culture and creativity in the region, as well as to be able to advocate nationally for increased investment in support of a broadly collaborative strategy. Elements of the strategy and core approach have been used as positive examples in the recently released CreativeNZ Arts Advocacy guide.

Our expanded delivery this year has continued to include the pilot Creative Careers support programme we have called *ELEVATE*. This programme has gone through a number of revisions to make it accessible and serve our community in the best way. It was designed to support creative practitioners to develop resilient and sustainable creative careers that look at diverse opportunities to support development in the sector.

This period has also included our targeted work in South Waikato with a specialist cultural activator, as well as additional capacity and resource development in the areas of Toi Māori support, Audience Development and Creative Education. This has been an exciting opportunity to test new ideas, expand our impact and support, and to grow our team with more creative specialists working to enhance the mana of our communities through arts, culture and creativity. These roles are coming to an end but the legacy of this work will continue to reach into our communities through the resources and materials that have been developed.

During this time, we also worked with Huber Social to complete the ***Wellbeing and Arts, Culture, and Creativity in the Waikato*** report. This large scale research project was developed to measure the social impact of community engagement with arts, culture and creativity in Waikato. This is important for a number of reasons: It supports ongoing advocacy around the value of arts, culture and creativity in our communities; it helps arts organisations better understand their impact and to support future activity; it provides local information of what is happening in our communities; and it provides evidence to engage with local and national government in their vision to benefit the wellbeing of people in Aotearoa. This report (and the various supporting resources and community toolkit) will be incredibly useful for our ongoing activity in the coming years.

At the end of 2022 we launched another new community-focussed creative initiative called ***Whiria Te Tāngata*** - a multi-community artist-in-residence programme over 12 months. From an open call for submissions from Waikato artists, ten Independent Artists have been chosen to weave creativity and wellbeing into the diverse and under-represented communities they are already activating across the Waikato. This is made possible through support from the team at Creative Waikato, and additional financial backing through Manatū Taonga's (Ministry of Culture and Heritage) Te Urungi innovation fund. This is a first-of-its-kind social innovation project for the arts sector in Aotearoa.

These elements flow through into our focus for the upcoming year. We know that in a time of increased anxiety and uncertainty, that the need for feelings of awe and wonder are increased as a provider of stress-relief and mindfulness. We have the evidence that speaks to the power of art, culture and creativity in these areas, and we know that there is a societal move towards finding more balance in life. Finding time to connect with other people, to find and make meaning, and to understand one another. Arts, culture and creativity create space for that to happen. Creative Waikato is here to continue to support the people of the Waikato Region to find their own connections with their stories, and find their own diverse ways to express themselves, to serve our collective wellbeing. Through this mahi we can collectively make the world a more interesting place. We can reimagine the future. Where we will create a positive, inclusive, open, creative and flourishing world for our children and their children.

Our board continues to guide our creative and strategic mahi. They have worked through this unusual period of change and growth, and are continuing to champion the work of the organisation and arts, culture and creativity in general, whilst also remaining mindful for the sustainability of the organisation. Sam Cunnane has remained chair throughout this period and at

our September AGM was reconfirmed for another year, with ceramic artist Alex Wilkinson taking on the role of Deputy Chair.

We know that arts, culture and creativity are powerful levers for positive social change. They show us that we make the world rather than simply inherit it. This is why the vision is for arts, culture and creativity to be embedded more broadly in future opportunities throughout the Waikato ecosystem. There is tremendous talent and value here and there is so much potential to have positive collective impact in this space. There is potential in collaborative approaches in our communities - upstream approaches that make meaningful long-term change.

The next year has the potential for a lot more change in our sector. COVID funding is coming to an end, alongside inflationary change, government elections, and change in national organisations like Creative New Zealand. This period of change will remain part of our advocacy focus for our work with other regional organisations and a national network of arts organisations, alongside working to continue to reshape the wider understanding and value of arts, culture and creativity in our society. This approach continues to support our core work, as well as responds to the goals and core threads of the Waikato Arts Navigator framework.

And as always, we continue working both at flax roots and at national advocacy levels to ensure creative community voices are heard. We are working to continue the growth of recognition and profile around Waikato artists. We are excited to continue to pursue our strategic vision into this next period of mahi.

Of course, all of this would have never been possible if it was not for the visionary support of our core funders and supporters. As always, we cannot thank you enough for your continued belief and support.

Ngā manaakitanga



**CHIEF EXECUTIVE
DR. JEREMY MAYALL**



**BOARD CHAIR
SAM CUNNANE**



Karakia for Creative Waikato | Toi Waikato

Tēnei au tēnei au te reo kawē e tau nei
This is me, this is me who is conveying these words

E karanga ana i te mauri tū
Calling forth the stance
te mauri ohooho
the essence of vitality
te mauri ora
the essence of wellbeing

Whakataū te ihi te wehi, kia tipu te mahi toi tangata
To acknowledge the growth of our Arts, our strengths and challenges

Hāpai te mahi toi
To elevate our arts

Taunaki te mahi tangata
To advocate for our people

Whakarahi te mahi toi
To amplify our arts

Tūhono te mahi tangata
To connect our people

Huakina te ngākau māhaki kia manaaki
With a kind heart to open up the generosity
kia tautoko
the support
kia rangatira ai
to be leaders

Kōkiri nei te tū tangata mo ngā iwi katoa
*To strengthen a unified stance for all
people in our communities*

Haumie
Hui e
Tāiki e!!!
Together we stand unified in this stance!!!

(Composed by Horomona Horo
in consultation with the Creative Waikato Team and Board)



Our Vision

The Waikato prospers with diverse and transformative creative activity.

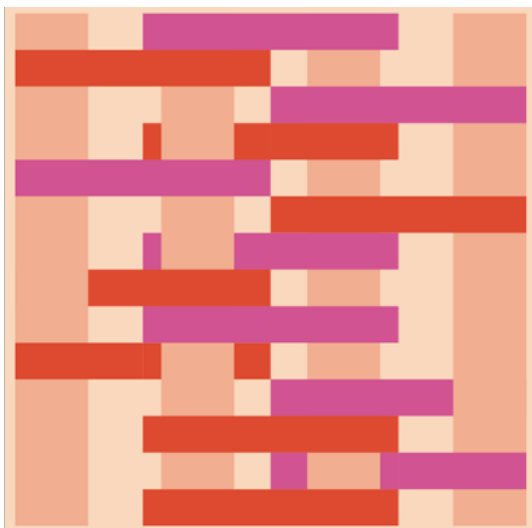
Our Purpose

We are navigators who lead the elevation of creativity in our region and collaborate to provide opportunities for cultural wellbeing.

WELLBEING THROUGH CREATIVITY

Wellbeing feels like it has become a buzzword of the past few years. It is measured and articulated in a range of different ways, but it is experienced holistically. While the term may be rendered complex through its ubiquity, the experience of feeling well is something we can all understand. For Creative Waikato, this underpins the work we do: building capability in artists and organisations to help them do what they do better; connecting communities together for positive outcomes; celebrating arts, culture and creativity in our region in all its different forms. And at the heart of this wellbeing-informed approach is an appreciation and connection to *CREATIVITY*.

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 wellbeing. It is one of the fundamental components of what makes us human. It enables us to tell stories, to share ideas and to invent. In shared creative experiences we find connections to one another and we can pursue those powerful moments of awe, wonder, happiness and curiosity.



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.

We believe that creativity through arts, culture, play and stories, is a fundamental and essential component of the wellbeing of individuals and their communities.

To use a creative metaphor, we can understand wellbeing as an intricately woven cloth. This 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. This fabric represents our capacity to live healthy and fulfilling lives, by allowing us to identify who we are, how we engage with each other, and how we think and feel. This is our wellbeing.

Art, culture and creativity are a sign of vitality in our society. They are the reason we move beyond just existing. They are the joy, the curiosity, the imaginative thought that encourages us to truly live rather than simply being productive workers in an economic machine. In an article by Arthur C Brooks, he talks about reframing our understanding of art, culture and creativity as being human habit. He said:

Too often, we let the humdrum reality of life get in the way of the arts, which can feel frivolous by comparison. But this is a mistake. The arts are the opposite of a diversion from reality; they might just be the most realistic glimpse we ever get into the nature and meaning of life. And if you make time for consuming and producing art—the same way you make time for work and exercise and family commitments—you’ll find your life getting fuller and happier.

This means seeing the way we choose to engage with art, culture and creativity as being more like sleep or active recreation - just one of those things we do to stay fully functioning and healthy human beings. It is a way to expand our perception from the narrow focus of everyday routine; to help us solve problems; to engage with the world, with universal ideas, to widen our vision - all these things are proven to lower stress. Art as an awakening rather than a narcotic.

We know that people value these things in the Waikato, and we know that for those people who have higher engagement with arts, culture and creativity, that they have higher perception of their individual wellbeing. Creative Waikato strives to work with artists, organisations, enablers and the wider Waikato community to ensure that there continues to be accessible, safe and sustainable, creative activity throughout our region.

We are working to support more of this type of activity in our communities, to encourage our civic leaders to invest more in this important area, and to encourage greater engagement with the wealth of creative activity that exists in our region. These things are all made possible by the many artists and organisations that we support - as well as acknowledging the massive commitment it takes from those community volunteers who work tirelessly to bring so many of these things to life throughout our communities. These people are truly making the most amazing contributions to community value and impact.



UNDERSTANDING WAIKATO WELLBEING THROUGH THE ARTS

We saw an opportunity to support the sector through a programme that would measure the social impact of community engagement with arts, culture and creativity in Waikato. In order to do this, we collaborated with the team at Huber Social to develop the “Wellbeing and Arts, Culture and Creativity in the Waikato” report, which is the result of a community wide survey conducted throughout the region to better understand the impacts of art, culture and creativity on the people who live here.

As we work towards a vision for a Waikato Region that thrives with diverse and transformative creative activity, we want to support artists and creative organisations to tell their stories about how their creativity has a positive impact on their communities. This means enabling the research and insights, as well as supporting its activation through education and support.

"Art reflects the wellbeing of the community and is an essential part of who we are to be human."

- Waikato resident, Hauraki District

What did we find?

Arts, culture and creativity play a vital role in a thriving society and touch all facets of our community. In the Waikato, community members engage with arts, culture and creativity every day, sometimes without even realising it. As a result of that ongoing engagement we learned that:

Engagement with arts, culture and creativity positively impacts wellbeing

- On average, Waikato residents who have a high level of engagement with arts, culture and creativity have higher well being than those who have little or no engagement. The more often we attend, create or participate in artistic and cultural events, the higher our wellbeing is likely to be.

Access to arts is important to everyone

- Waikato residents who believe they have greater access to arts, culture and creativity are also more likely to have higher overall wellbeing. This exists for all people, but for those who consider themselves less engaged with the creative sector, perceived access is even more important.

Mental wellness is a priority need in Waikato

- Mental wellness is one of the strongest predictors of overall wellbeing for all Waikato residents, regardless of level of engagement with arts, culture and creativity. There is a wealth of evidence that shows that engagement with arts, culture and creativity is one way of improving mental health outcomes, so encouraging more engagement can contribute to a positive shift.

The Waikato community values arts, culture and creativity

- All Waikato residents recognise the value that arts, culture and creativity contribute to their everyday life, as well as that of their whānau and children.



STRATEGIC VISION

Our vision was created with the community and strives for a Waikato Region that thrives with diverse and transformative creative activity. We see this as an active vision. One that should empower change, should address the conditions that will enable that change, and should help to frame priorities for different parties.

We know that the way this is implemented will have to look at the way the sector is funded and valued. It has a vision for public good, access, participation and community wellbeing. It should **acknowledge the role that creative practice and arts and cultural activity can have, and should have, in the lives of all New Zealanders.**

The activation of this strategy must include impact within the education system. Acknowledging how vital creativity and curiosity will be for future generations. Acknowledging the research-informed role that creative practice will play in the resilience and wellbeing of people. This would also become a vital driver of change towards a cultural shift in understanding and value for the sector, general individual and collective wellbeing, as well as the overall sustainability of the sector.

We also know that it is important to have transparent communication around government strategies, priorities and outcomes, and how the different enablers will contribute to that. As part of that our advocacy work for the Waikato region includes targeted engagement with national arts organisations, government bodies and ministries. We know that it is vital for us to understand the system, and advocate for how all people in our region should be able to access arts, culture and creativity in their lives.

Ultimately this is about having a shared language, a way to understand and communicate the value of what we do, and to find ways to work with one another to achieve greater outcomes. There are a range of ways this can be done, but having a clarity of communication, and thinking about how this vision can inspire change is vital. These things are top of mind for our communities, looking at how we can collectively thrive with diverse and transformative creative activity.

CREATIVE WELLBEING	CREATIVE PROSPERITY	CREATIVE EXPERIENCES	CREATIVE EDUCATION	CREATIVE INNOVATION
Mental, physical & spiritual wellbeing	Creative economies	People experience local, national, international arts	Participatory art projects	Business partnerships
Positive collective & individual identities	Attract & retain residents	Community & cultural expression	Upskilling creative professionals	Informing local government decision making
Create, grow & strengthen communities	Tourism opportunities	Recreation & interaction	Community art classes & projects	Local problem solving
Inspired responses to challenges such as Covid-19	Positive national perceptions	Community engagement & connection	Youth development	Distinct local expression
Strengthened connection to place	Increased investment from regional & national funders	Local pride	Audience development	Creative export opportunities

Our Brand Refresh

New look, new space, new website

At our core, Creative Waikato is here to provide creative capability development for artists and arts organisations and strategic direction and support for sustainable arts, culture and creativity in our region. We have also recently been further recognised as a changemaker, looking at different ways of utilising creativity to serve collective wellbeing.

The organisation has been around 10 years now and has a lot of equity, regionally and nationally. The last branding with the swirl and pastel colours did work well in its adaptability and representation of the large sector it sits in. Its ambiguity allowed for multiple interpretations, but mainly it projected the idea of energy and creative action.

As we were coming into the 10th year it was a good time to relook at the master brand and evaluate the presence and functionality of the branding, how it positions CW and matches its promise of being a strong brand with a unique position in the sector.

A New Look:

**Creative
Waikato
Toi Waikato**

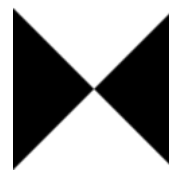
Our new logotype is a strong, simple form that represents our solid and supportive role in the Sector. The logo creates parity between the English and Māori translations in an interchangeable playful way, reinforcing our strong cultural values.

The stacked nature of the words create an implied movement relating to the organisation's ability to adapt and thrive in changing times and shifting environments. The logo block is also a recognisable form within the brand itself.

Alongside this new look came new colours and logos to represent our strategic pou.



ELEVATE - HĀPAI



CONNECT - TŪHONO



AMPLIFY - WHAKARAHI



ADVOCATE - TAUNAKI

And a palette of vibrant new colours to work throughout the flow of our storytelling.



2022-23 Annual Report

Key Achievements and Highlights by Strategic Focus Area



ELEVATE - HĀPAI

We help you to succeed through advice, training and support

This focus area is on working with artists and arts organisations to upskill the creative ecosystem to better thrive in our communities.

Key Focus Areas

- Creative Development Services - capability coaching and workshops – 700+
- Hamilton Creative Community Scheme Funding allocation - \$163,476 to 70 projects
- Toi Maaori Support - collaborative programmes and artistic career development (including 24 focussed Toi Maaori creative career workshops)
- Creative Careers Support Programme - extended pilot (over 190 workshops delivered)
- Continued increase in national arts funding into the Waikato Region - support to individuals and groups plus new initiatives (eg/ Whiria Te Tāngata)

Our stories

CREATIVE DEVELOPMENT

Creative Development continues to be a core part of our services and connection with the arts community. This is delivered through workshops, mentoring, resource sharing and development of new programmes.

Creative Development takes a range of forms including ArtReach, ELEVATE, Pakihi Toi, as well as our Creative Coaching and Audience Development mahi. A big area of focus this past year has continued to be on delivery of the ELEVATE Creative Careers programme. This programme was launched in early 2021 with the support of the Ministry of Social Development and Ministry of Culture and Heritage. The programme was scheduled to finish in February 2023, but has recently been extended through to June 2023 as national evaluation is underway.



This programme has been designed to help individuals get to the next level, remove the blocks and create sustainable and impact careers from their creative practice. Through workshops, personal development plans, and expert support from the CW team, ELEVATE develops business skills, knowledge and resources to help artists carve a realistic pathway toward their creative career goals. It is about developing flourishing communities of practice within our local ecosystem to support one another through the process of working as a creative.

We have delivered 192 workshops over the course of the programme to 8 cohorts with 138 diverse artists from throughout the Waikato Region. Artforms include: Music, Visual Art, Filmmaking, Drag, Performing Arts, Costume, Fashion, Woodworking, textiles, sculpting, nga toi Māori, Photography and Design. Participants are largely Pakeha but with growing numbers of Māori and Pacific participants as well as members from migrant communities including, Pakistani, Brazillian, Japanese, Singaporean, Moroccan, South African, Indian.

We have recently been working through a new iteration of this programme which has been designed to build from the previous version to create a more flexible and accessible support programme that is delivered through pre-recorded workshops, monthly online hui's, digital resources, a Professional Development Plan, and support from industry experts at Creative Waikato.



AN ELEVATE SUCCESS STORY

Hong Cumming is an artist who maintains curiosity and creativity. As owner of The Art Studio in Kirikiriroa, Hamilton she ensures others are given opportunities to enjoy reaching their potential. Hong's childhood in Shanghai was a creative one and alongside her older brother much time was spent sketching and learning together. Alongside raising three children and working in the family business, she wanted to work as an artist teacher so set up a studio in the back shed of their property, and through connections in the Chinese community she started to work with a small cohort of students.

Hong credits ELEVATE with making significant changes in her business model to achieve her vision. These include bringing in more teachers and classes within a commercial framework, more variety of styles to bring more artists and therefore more students into the workshop, and also altered structures and strategy, such as increased networking to keep the business growing. You can find out more about Hong online on Instagram at @hong_cumming and pop in for a coffee and a class at The Art Studio on Casabella Lane in Central Kirikiriroa.



TOI MAAORI SUPPORT

One of the key focus areas of the Kaiwhakahaere i nga Mahi Toi is to develop the profile and understanding of Māori creativity in the region. This is a multifaceted area of exploration, and through delivering the depth and breadth of mahi throughout the year, there have been a range of observations that seem to exist across the diverse artists and organisations we have connected with. These observations include the strengths and challenges demonstrated by the people we have connected with through this mahi.

- **Toi artists are innovative and adaptable.** They aren't afraid to move with the times. They are excited to adopt new technologies which are also interwoven with traditional practice.
- **Toi artists are often multidisciplinary** and self described as "tutu artists." This grants our artists the ability to be resilient, as they can swing from discipline to discipline depending on the demand of the market and other needs.
- **Toi artists embrace a holistic approach to art-making** because traditionally, toi is not separate from other areas of life, it is/was in the everyday. There is no separation of the act of creation from the emotional and spiritual—toi is not just an intellectual or physical process. When toi artists speak about the creation of their art, concepts such as Atua Māori, wairua and mauri are sometimes included in that discussion. This holistic approach feels approachable and accessible to a wider audience.
- **Toi artists think outside the white four walls of the gallery** setting for showcasing their work. It is not unusual for artists to display work in spaces such as Marae or in public spaces which increases audience accessibility.
- **Toi artists are deeply motivated to collaborate and network**, especially kanohi ki to kanohi. Whanaungatanga is a vital component of this community.
- **Toi artists are hungry for business development tools** such as time-management, funding, taxes, pricing. They are generous with sharing their newly found skills with their friends and whānau.
- **Toi artists value Manaakitanga and Kotahitanga.** There is a generosity of spirit and a desire to see other artists achieve their goals. There is often a non-competitive slant to their approach. They regularly illustrate great manaakitanga, warmth and generosity, and believe that there is room for everyone.
- **Toi artists value Whakawhanaungatanga**, and this concept is very important to establishing lasting, deep and trusting relationships in the creative community. It is vital when the toi community draws together at hui for example that time is given to allow for organic connection. Giving time and space for introductions, pepeha, karakia, whakataukī and leaving time for conversations is important. This requires time and patience for trust and meaningful connection.
- **Toi artists can feel a deep sense of obligation to the community**—whether it be to iwi, hapū, marae, close or extended whānau. If they are in a traditional form such as whakairo then this is even more acute as they may be needed to restore marae or other important taonga that belong to the hapū. Whānau is important and can take



precedence. If you are an important pou in the community, the distinction between home life and professional life can become blurred.

- **Toi artists can feel a deep sense of obligation to honour the stories of their tupuna.** Many toi artists see the importance of retelling traumatic histories through their mahi. There is healing found in this process.
- **Toi artists want to help other people** either through teaching, volunteering or sharing their knowledge through community work.
- **Toi Artists want art to be accessible to all.** Many artists want toi to be accessible and they have a desire to see toi in every house. As a result, some have adopted a sliding scale price point on their work e.g. selling affordable prints or smaller works, separate from their more expensive works.

TOI MAAORI CREATIVE CAREERS SUPPORT



One of the core programmes of delivery in support of Toi Maaori practitioners beyond regular creative development support was the Toi Maaori cohort of ELEVATE. This brought together a number of practitioners from around the region to develop their creative careers. Participants who went through this 9month programme have achieved many things that they feel they would not have achieved if it wasn't for the support and learning from within this programme. It gave more insight on their practice and how they can move in a more global direction, while keeping their own mana and ethics. The programme was largely delivered online, but every kanohi ki te kanohi interaction as a rōpū was always a highlight, especially the last workshop of Celebrating success and moving forward where participants were able to show their creative offerings and have more whakawhānaungatanga opportunities.

SUPPORT IN THE COMMUNITY

Throughout the year one of the examples of support we were able to provide was for the first year of a three year hue wānanga called Hine Pū Te Hue for wahine. This programme has been developed and led by Hinewirangi Kohu Morgan who is a well-known artist, taonga pūoro expert, and writer, who has a wealth of knowledge that she would like to give back to those who are interested in learning more - particularly with regards to the Hue. Through this mahi, we were able to offer support for a hue wānanga that had been developed by Hinewirangi to build capability in 10 wahine participants over the course of the 3 year hue wānanga.

Year 1.

First noho. The participants all receive a hue, and it will be based around each one of the traditional uses that our tupuna used them for. At the end of this year will be their first exhibition of their carved pieces and they will be there to tell stories.

Year 2.

Is about participants learning how to grow, and how to take them from the seed to the produce, which goes down in June Matariki, learning the appropriate growing time and all the pūrakau that go with this.

Year 3.

An exhibition to showcase the three years of learning.



The participants had their first year graduation ceremony where each participant gave their story on how they got involved in attending the wānanga. It was a privilege to hear amazing stories of trials and tribulation and finding themselves as wahine who have a purpose in life. This wānanga helped participants to find themselves through the process. Connecting with other participants that have so many things in common. The common struggles of life, the common celebrations in life. Throughout their journey, they were able to really hone their artistic flare and incorporate it in their hue.

FUNDING THE ARTS

2022 continues the trend of increased arts sector funding in the region. There are a number of artists and organisations that have received additional support, and the continued growing reputation for creativity in the Waikato has seen more awareness of the range of things taking place. Of course, this is unfortunately paired with continued impact from COVID on the sector with many performing arts events having to cancel shows, or postpone events, and there is the end of the national sector support funding to contend with in June 2023. We know that there has been ongoing advocacy to central government and ministries around increased levels of arts funding nationally, around the potential for a Regional Arts Network that is supported like the RST model, and that submissions have been made through the Future for Local Government around the need to increase investment in the arts, culture and creative sector as a tool for community wellbeing.

One of the reliable sources of flax roots community arts funding that many in the sector utilise is the Creative Communities Scheme. We continue to facilitate this for HCC, as well as providing support for other councils in the region about this fund. We see a wide range of exciting community-focussed activities coming through this fund, and it is great to be able to provide support in a range of ways with these creative programmes. Some of these include:

- **Project All Sorts** - a programme for youth improv performers from around the Waikato.
 - The key tenet of Project Allsorts has been capability, confidence, and community. Build the capability of the youth performers by enabling them to play in a safe space. Help them to be confident enough to perform in front of their peers. And create a community where they feel a sense of belonging with like-minded performers. Improv is an interesting genre to engage rangatahi with as it depends on thinking quickly and trusting the people you're performing with. By creating this programme and making it both accessible and free of charge, we are facilitating the creation of a new community of performers.
- **Real Vegan Cult** - An independent music rehearsal space
 - The rehearsal space that RVC had in Te Rapa was struggling through COVID and they were looking to close the space. This was used by many local punk/rock bands as a low cost option to practise from. Due to CCS funding covering their year's lease, they have continued to offer a low cost rehearsal space making it attainable for bands to form and practise together. The bands that have started or continued to use the space have gone on to support our local venues such as Last Place and Nivara lounge.
- **Ira Taniwha** - a 3 day festival celebrating Māori and Indigenous creative practice and community
 - Activities included were; Mihi whakatau with Taonga Pūoro and spoken word, workshop sharing the pūrākau of ngā Atua



Wāhine and expressing these stories through creativity with artist Pounamu Wharekawa, Kiki night (ballroom) celebrating creative dress, self-expression and dance, poetry reading from indigenous and migrant communities at the Meteor. This provided an opportunity for collaboration, community building, knowledge sharing etc. The ballroom was the first for Kirikiriroa and the community was able to have a safe space to come together and celebrate one another. The community engagement was great and the night was a sell-out.

- **Takatapui Wānanga** - A Queer Indigenous Youth Wānanga

- This Wānanga is an opportunity for Queer Indigenous youth to connect with mātauranga mahi toi Māori through Taonga Pūoro and mahi aute (Māori bark cloth). The kaupapa was specifically created for rangatahi takatāpui (young queer indigenous people). This meant that participants with intersectional and diverse identities came together to share in learning, conversation, and community. Further, workshop facilitators were both peers and tuakana from within the community, and included Māori, Pasifika, and people from refugee backgrounds. This wānanga was planned so that people with varied accessibility needs, of which there were 9 who self-identified, were able to safely and comfortably attend, as well as parents of young children, of which there were three in attendance. The take of this wānanga was 'kia haumi ai te hapori' - let us bring together our community.



- **Desert Springs Ministries** - Raranga workshops, focusing on Enderley and Fairfield suburbs

- Desert Springs Ministries Trust was a new applicant to CCS and was supported to deliver a craft making programme for the Enderley/Fairfield communities. The grant funding helps to offset the costs of the programme allowing participants to attend for free. Over 2022 they saw an increase in the number of people attending the craft group programme, including having their first male join the programme. Two-thirds of the attendees are Maori, and overall the group is fairly representative of the community ethnicities. The Trust plans to continue the craft making programme in 2023, offering more levels of Raranga flax weaving learnings, and sessions in Maori design masterclasses.



- **Trees at the Meteor** - community participatory creative event

- The community was excited to see the return of the iconic event Trees at the Meteor in December 2022. The event exhibits creative, hand-made interpretations of festive trees, focusing on connection and kindness with the community at Christmas time. The Trees entries come from a huge range of local crafters and creators, from the Waikato Hospital ED to local primary schools, kindergartens, family groups to solo crafters and established artists. Hundreds of creators are involved in this process. This project is an excellent example of CCS funding being used for a project that creates opportunities for local communities to engage with, and participate in local arts activities.





CONNECT - TŪHONO

We connect you with people and places for stronger creative outcomes.

This focus area is on encouraging collaboration, joining the dots in our community, and looking for ways that creativity can thrive in different spaces.

Key Focus Areas

- Contributing to regional initiatives like The Waikato Plan and Waikato Wellbeing Project
- Connected to Regional Arts Network Aotearoa for understanding broader opportunities
- Facilitating connections between business and creative communities through collaborative projects
- Serving as a conduit for community art commissions and projects

Our stories

CULTURAL ACTIVATOR



The Cultural Activator Pilot Programme in South Waikato was run through to October 2022 with support from the Ministry of Culture and Heritage. The programme was designed to encourage community creativity and throughout the programme has certainly contributed to the wellbeing and creative visibility of the community in South Waikato. This role has enabled us to work alongside the community to strengthen activity, to inspire possibility and to serve as a catalyst to spark potential in the pool of creatives that exist in this space. We know that the Cultural Activation of the South Waikato has contributed to serving the wider community and has brought more attention to the multiple talents of the multidisciplinary art practitioners in this area as well as

contributing to the development of creative careers. The programme included regular workshops and creative classes, multiple community exhibitions, a Matariki performance day, a publication of creative work, and a painting group run at Poohara Marae.

REFLECTIONS ON THE PROGRAMME:

“I was part of an experimental painting programme which was delivered on my marae at Poohara Pa. There are many reasons why this was special to me. The fact that it was being delivered on my marae already made it a positive feeling for me but also that I was learning a new skill around people that were already familiar to me, my extended whanau.

We are Ngati Korokii, e rua nga marae kotahi te iwi meaning we have two marae but we are one people. So my whanau came from both marae, my cousins, my nieces and my daughter all learning alongside each other just like our reo wānanga and that alone was special. We were provided with exceptional resources but also guided in how to use them. I learnt about colour blending and some history on art and the style of different artists. Then to top it off we even got to take part in an exhibition in Tokoroa to display one of our art pieces which is now hanging in our iwi hauora space.

It has made a profound impact on me in that I know I can just pick up my tools and paint when I feel like it and not thinking I have to have a whole lot of experience but just doing it for the relaxed feeling and pleasure it provides. I cannot thank Manatū Taonga enough for this opportunity which I hope continues to provide more opportunities for other whanau.”

**- Member of the
Experimental Painting Group at
Poohara Marae.**



CREATIVE EDUCATION

Creativity in education is a core component of thriving tamariki and rangatahi, as well as building towards cultural literacy and wellbeing in our communities. Building upon the work done with our Kotahitanga School Kit, we wanted to develop a programme to support more arts and creative activity in schools in the Waikato region. Unfortunately, the Ministry of Education hasn't made any new arts resources in a while, and

they tend to be presented as an extra thing, rather than woven throughout the curriculum. With this in mind we have developed **The Integrated Creativity Resource (ICR)**. This is a range of activities and starters which will be both a physical/tangible kit and a suite of online lesson and unit plans. These will give teachers ideas for integrating creative activities into existing planning linked to The New Zealand Curriculum. The resource is aimed at Primary age students and will be geared and targeted at levels 1 to 4 of the curriculum.



In short the resource provides activities where several curriculum areas are taught in tandem, providing both formative and summative assessment opportunities. They are a step-by-step planning tool which will reduce workload for teachers and give them the confidence to teach the arts even if they have had minimal instruction in how to do so during their teacher training. The resource, in its initial form, consists of 26 tangible resources covering the breadth of the NZ Curriculum with

activities and units where for example, a science focus works in tandem with the four areas of the arts curriculum (dance, music, visual art, drama).

One of the most interesting insights we have gained is that there is a great desire amongst teachers to develop more integrated curricula where all aspects of the student are nurtured and appreciated. The main feedback I have received after introducing the ICR to kaiako is that it is an idea whose time has come. Many teachers receive minimal instruction around creative teaching during their training and just need support and assistance in developing their confidence and capability in this area.

The best way that we can provide support to teachers is to give them concrete examples of ways in which to incorporate Arts and creativity experiences into their curriculums without increasing workloads in any significant way. The Integrated Creativity Resource should act as a supporting tool to give teachers initial ideas which they can easily implement while they develop their internal creativity muscles. The resource is not an exhaustive one-stop-shop for teachers but a way of proving that integrating creativity is possible and workable within an everyday classroom context.



CREATIVE ACTS OF KINDNESS



Kindness is a world changing idea. No matter the scale of the act of kindness, the ripples it sends out have the power to make incredible unexpected changes into the future.

Since launching our Creative Acts of Kindness initiative, it has been remarkable to experience the conversation, the change in thought, the reflection, and the potential in what might be brought to life by these acts of creativity and kindness shared by local Waikato artists. This project saw 40 new creative works (20 videos and 20 posters) sharing messages of kindness from

throughout the Waikato Region. These demonstrations of kindness through creative activity have the potential to be the catalyst that brings joy into someone's life. They might brighten the day. They might provide a moment of rest and reset. They might inspire us to err on the side of kindness as we move throughout each day.

The impact of kindness also becomes a cycle of positive activity. The act of experiencing kindness inspires us to be compassionate to others. The giving and receiving of kindness has a positive shift on our mental and physical wellbeing. It also then inspires others to be compassionate. A perpetual feedback loop of kindness – that is a way to change our world.



WHIRIA TE TĀNGATA

We had an opportunity to develop an application for the Manatū Taonga Te Urungi: Innovating Aotearoa Fund. An application where we wanted to test how to demonstrate social innovation – a project that provided a tangible small scale example of the way system change might be addressed in the future. We know that there is a need to support community wellbeing through creative activity as a pathway to encouraging meaningful arts experiences, increased cultural literacy, and creating space for celebrations of creativity as a tool for resilience. In this we are looking at strengths-based investment in creativity that is focussed on outcomes rather than outputs.

To share some of the ideas in perhaps more complex terms, we see this innovative project as being something that provides a way of re-imagining a sector that isn't constrained by current structures. It explores some of the possibilities that could exist outside of the gig-based economy, project-based funding models, and capitalist/commercial systems that, in a way, force our creative practitioners to navigate a balance between sustainability and accessibility that doesn't regularly support ongoing community-embedded creative practice. In order to explore future possibilities we are demonstrating a smaller version of potential systemic change. We want to enable the rippling benefits of arts activation to flow through communities supporting social cohesion, wellbeing benefits and a sense of place.



Whiria te Tāngata (weave the people together) is a multi-community artist in residence pilot to enable artists to practice and develop work with and through their communities. This residency includes support such as wraparound mentorship, collaborative pathways and ongoing evaluation.

What does that mean?

This is an example of systems change around creative enablers in our communities. It is looking at new models of patronage for artists and creative practitioners who are delivering work with and for the diverse communities of the Waikato. It is connected to international examples of pilot programmes that are exploring 'guaranteed income for artists' or 'artist wage' or 'artist UBI' type initiatives. It is looking to demonstrate the community impact that is possible when artists are supported to do their work. It is serving to weave into the wellbeing impacts that having accessible local creative activity can achieve.

It is a targeted Waikato-based pilot that will be supporting 10 emerging artists in 10 diverse communities, who will be paid for one year to deliver their creative activities with and for their communities. Alongside receiving a stipend for the year, each artist will be paired with an experienced artist mentor who will also be paid for their service in



supporting the growth of the emerging artists. It is a project that is inspired globally, connected nationally, framed regionally, and activated locally. It is designed to strengthen connections between artists and their communities, to activate those communities through creative practice, and to transcend across communities and artforms to establish a collaborative community of practice to support the practitioners.

We ended 2022 with the selection of 10 artists, and welcomed them onto this journey through a wānanga day of sharing, korero and creativity. We look forward to sharing more stories of their journey over the next year.



AMPLIFY - WHAKARAHI

We share stories far and wide and drive engagement with creative activity.

This focus area is on celebrating the arts, culture and creative activity that takes place in our region, and helping to share those stories with our communities.

Key numbers

- Creative Waikato newsletters – 28 e-news and the ‘Things To Do’ event emails
- Livestream events – 3 events with discussions around the arts, and various tips and tricks
- Video stories – 41 video stories about local artists, and tips for your own creative practice
- Media Coverage – 15 additional news articles with our support.
- Articles and Thought Leadership – 20 articles, think pieces, and sharing our stories.

Our stories

STRENGTH-BASED STORYTELLING

As we look to understand the impact of our work and to encourage further engagement with positive experiences, how we tell our stories becomes so much more important. Humans are naturally storytellers. It is how we communicate ideas, learn and understand, and build our future. Throughout our communications we look for a strength-based values-led approach to sharing ideas and shaping helpful narratives around arts, culture and creativity. Throughout the year, we have shared stories about local artists and events, provided insights through research and community engagement, and demonstrated thought leadership around the broader roles for creativity in our everyday lives as a tool for health, recovery and connection.

Part of our contribution to sharing this comms and advocacy approach has been through work led by Creative NZ and The Workshop around a guide resource for arts advocates. This guide was shaped by Te Rōpū Mana Toi (a national advocacy advisory group which includes our CEO Jeremy Mayall), and includes elements from the Waikato Arts Navigator and other pieces of our work as examples of best practice.

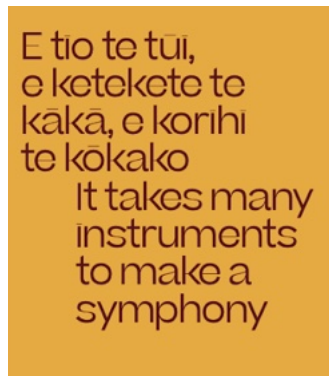


Changing the story on arts, culture, and creativity in Aotearoa is available in two main formats; the full guide, and a more concise ‘quick guide’ that communicates the key concepts. The guide offers advice on how to build effective public narratives that celebrate and support the role arts, culture and creativity play in our lives, and also, communicate what changes our sector and communities need to flourish.

AUDIENCE DEVELOPMENT

Audience development is a concept that is often discussed, but is hard to define. Some people think audience development is using marketing techniques to sell more tickets, and some people think it's growing the general public into audiences who attend more events – both of which are somewhat relevant. We have been on a process of discovery to better understand what audience development is for our region, and have developed a suite of resources to best support the various creatives and creative organisations in the Waikato. Having something locally connected is vital, because a lot of the current information, research and resources for audience development come from larger cities around the world, whereas for us, we know that being regional has its own unique needs.

This resource development now includes 10 toolkits - in-depth usable PDF resources that include:



- What is Audience Development?
- Know Your Audience (why gathering feedback is crucial)
- Measure Your Audience (data and its relevance)
- Audience Segmentation (a Waikato perspective on international models)
- How to Deepen Your Relationship with Your Audience
- Collaboration (including mapping your ecosystem)
- Accessibility, Diversity and Inclusion
- Volunteers (and how to support them)
- Programming and Curating
- Alternative Pricing Models, Memberships and Subscriptions

The research focus for these were guided by ongoing and consistent consultation and activity in the creative and cultural Waikato community. We will be sharing these with the community throughout 2023 and look forward to seeing this research put into practice.

CREATIVE PLAY

Play and the creative process are important activities for artists. These things are part of how artists work, and how we understand what we do. There is also great value in the power of creative play for 'non-artists' - for everyone in our communities to have some fun and find the creative activity that resonates with them. It can take many forms, and is an important part of individual wellbeing. Play has been shown to release endorphins, improve brain functionality, and stimulate creativity. It can contribute to our physical health and energy levels, it also improves memory and stimulates the growth of the cerebral cortex.

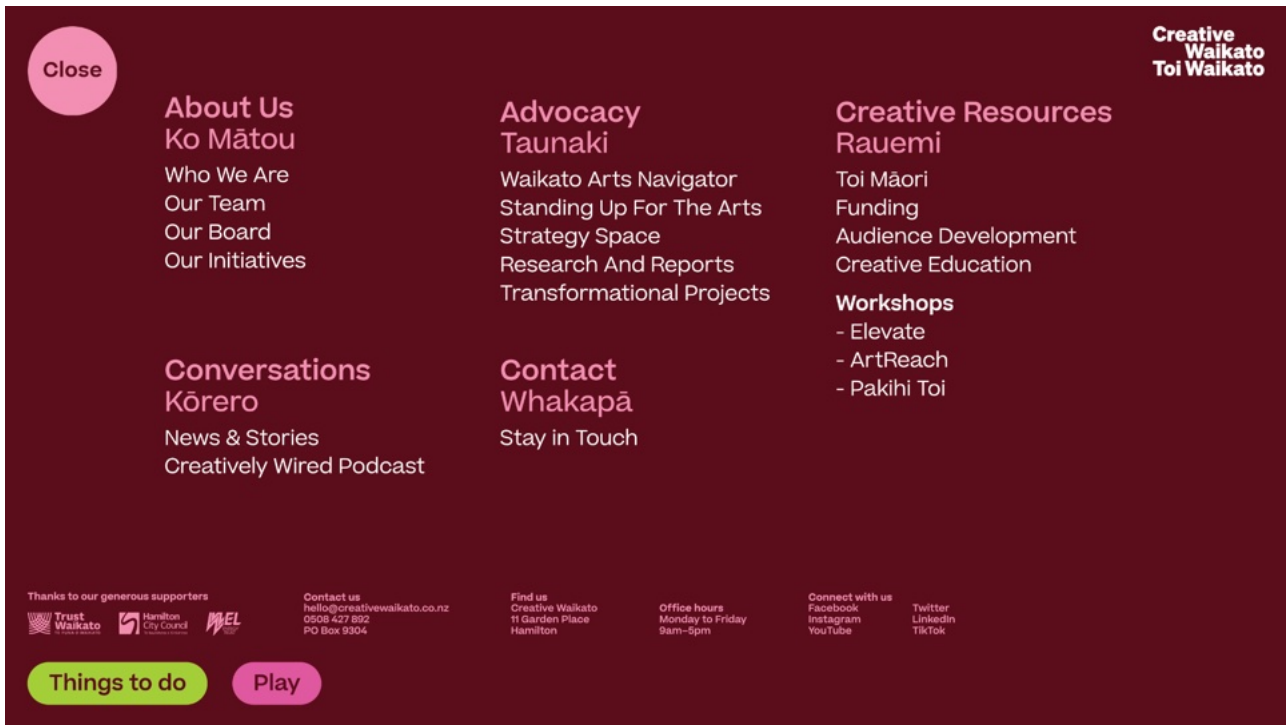
When we play we open our minds to imagination, to creativity, to a curiosity about what comes next and how our ideas will flow as we enter into a flow state. A space of free creativity that doesn't second guess what you are doing or why you are doing it. This is a great space to be. When this becomes a regular part of our lives, it becomes more than just a distraction or momentary diversion, but a process that ripples through into other tangential benefits. This is an important part of exploring the role arts, culture and creativity play in the lives of all people in the Waikato region.

We have shared a number of articles about this subject, including one written for Ensemble Magazine, and co-hosting a webinar for Te Ora Auaha - The Creative Wellbeing Alliance. This is a growth area for the broader work that Creative Waikato is exploring, and we will continue to create resources to support this into 2023.

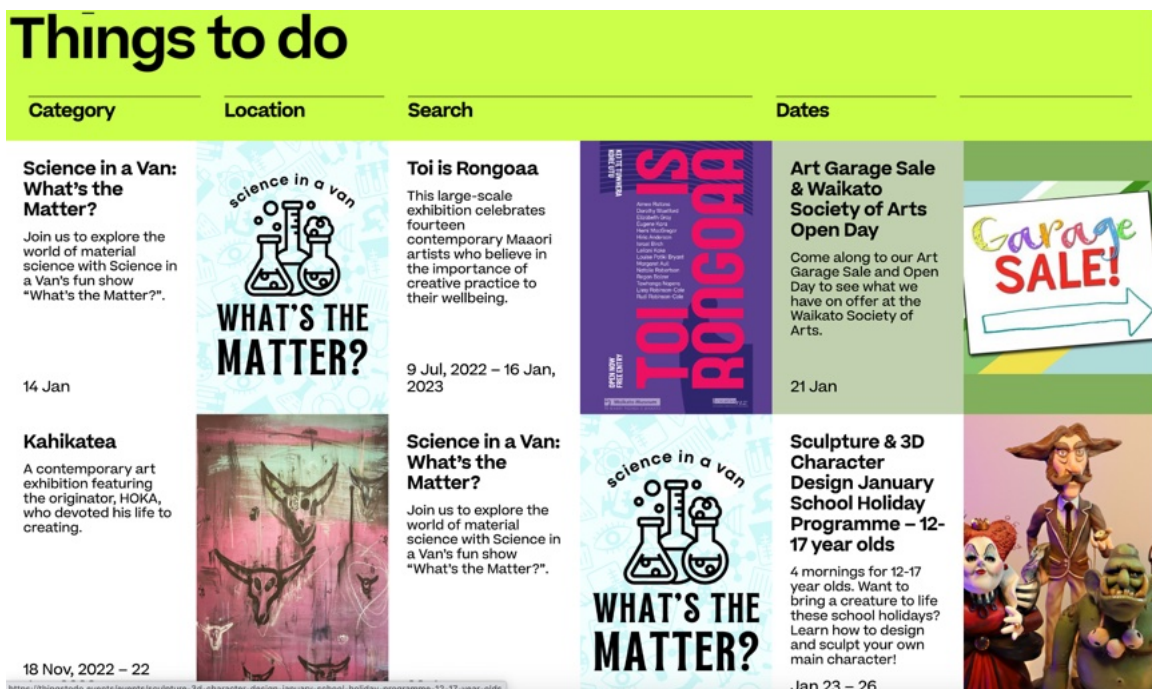


NEW WEBSITE

A big component of the way that we share stories far and wide and drive engagement with creative activity is through our web presence. This includes social media, video and various guest articles, but this is largely based around our website. Early in 2022 we launched a new look website, as well as a new events microsite called 'Things To Do'. These new initiatives were to support our new look and design, but to also create a more functional and accessible online service to share resources and ideas, as well as to serve as a go-to resource for information, activity and inspiration. These things were developed in collaboration with our design partner AREA Design, who have done an amazing job of helping us to communicate as effectively as possible. Everything is easy to find, and allows for growth and adaptation as is needed.



Things to do is a community updated event calendar that includes all of the different activities taking place throughout the Waikato Region. It is searchable and contains all the information you need, as well as linking to our e-news and social media platforms.





ADVOCATE - TAUNAKI

We stand up for the arts as they are essential to the wellbeing of our region.

This focus area is on championing the role of arts, culture and creativity in our society as being an essential part of the wellbeing of our community.

Key Focus Areas

- Contributing to locally and nationally relevant research projects and reports
- Engaging with local Council around civic issues and arts activities
- Submissions to national government and ministries around arts, culture and creativity
- Contribution to National advocacy through collaborative networks

Our stories

WAIKATO ARTS NAVIGATOR

The ongoing activation and implementation of the Waikato Arts Navigator (WAN) as a collaborative regional strategic framework continues as part of our work throughout the region and our contributions to regional activity. The WAN is a framework that has been utilised to form the basis of localised Arts Action Plans - plans that seek to embed arts, culture and creativity across many facets of council activity in alignment with their other strategic documents. We are also developing guides to support arts organisations to use some of the same language and measures in their own activity so that we can continue to work towards our collective vision for arts and creative outcomes for all our communities.



The goal with this work is to enhance the strengths that have been identified through the research and development of this work. We will be strategically working to help design activity to work with the specific needs of each part of the region. By leading the project with aligned arts objectives for the whole region, this will allow for a more practical approach, resulting in a living and perpetual resource, rather than a strategy, which can be at the mercy of a 3-year political cycle. For more information about this:

<https://creativewaikato.co.nz/waikatoartsnavigator>

We have also been working on a secondary strategy that draws upon the central threads of the WAN but provides more detailed focus on the Performing Arts Sector in the lead up to the new Waikato Regional Theatre. The development of this strategy was an opportunity to meaningfully re-engage with our diverse communities, and to hear from the people who are already having a great impact on the performing lives of our region, but who also want to see the sector continue to thrive and to help shape the future for this vital ecosystem. To build a strategic framework for the Performing Arts in the Waikato. A community-led

holistic strategy that looked at pathways, access and equity, stories, flourishing creative careers, and those transformative experiences that inspire us and bring joy, wonder, inspiration and connection to our lives.

Alongside research, insights from other work, and guidance from a strategic advisory group, the Creative Waikato team wanted to properly understand the performing arts sector ecosystem from all vantage points, so interviews and focus groups were undertaken, which included 70 people who are involved in the performing arts sector i.e., artists, arts organisations, educators and technicians, but also sought to capture voices of those in the wider community including ethnic groups, community houses, LGBTQI+, Māori, Pasifika, people working with youth and those who have access issues

Through this process we have heard that our communities want: more opportunities for tamariki and rangatahi to have creative experiences and education; more diversity of representation and inclusive activity; consistent accessibility and the opportunity to connect with others in their communities; increased resourcing and development opportunities; spaces for rehearsal, development and community connection; and, increased investment and more opportunities to engage both as practitioners and audiences.

The final strategy is due for release in 2023.

GOVERNMENT ENGAGEMENT

During 2022 our government engagement has taken many forms. At a local level it has included submissions around key civic developments, but one of the key engagements was through our Election Connection Roadshow in the lead up to the local government election. This included presentations in all 10 districts talking to potential candidates and voters about the connections between councils and the creative sector. Wellbeing is the core business of our local government. The ability for our communities to be safe, connected and vibrant. Everyone should be able to experience and benefit from the art, culture and creativity that is all around us. As regional leaders we need to proactively support access to arts, culture and creativity of all types for all communities. When our artists, organisations, spaces, and creative enablers get the right support, more of us can be healthy, connected and thriving.

Outside of this we have created and contributed to submissions on: the Long-Term Insights Briefing for the Ministry of Culture and Heritage; The Productivity Commission Fair Chance for All report; The Future for Local Government Review; The Social Cohesion research by The Ministry for Social Development; as well as regional sector updates for MCH through the Regional Arts Network of Aotearoa.



"The impact of arts culture and creativity on my life encourages my life to be full of life, love and goodness. It builds my wellbeing and encourages me to support others to be the same."

- Waikato resident, Hamilton City

ADVOCACY AND RESEARCH

In support of our sector and ensuring that there is relevant evidence and clear information we understand the importance of research and insights that are locally connected and examine the state of the sector and wider

community, whilst also providing potential pathways for future work. There are complexities around understanding the outcomes and details of complex ephemeral experiences like cultural and creative events, but there is a growing pool of research that connects this holistic experience to useful narrative measures. Things like the our ongoing research work with Huber Social (with core report, supplementary community voices report, and the supporting community toolkit to support further implementation and engagement), as well as recent research projects around the 'State of the Arts' with Arts Wellington and Te Taumata Toi-A-Iwi with research partner Dovetail.



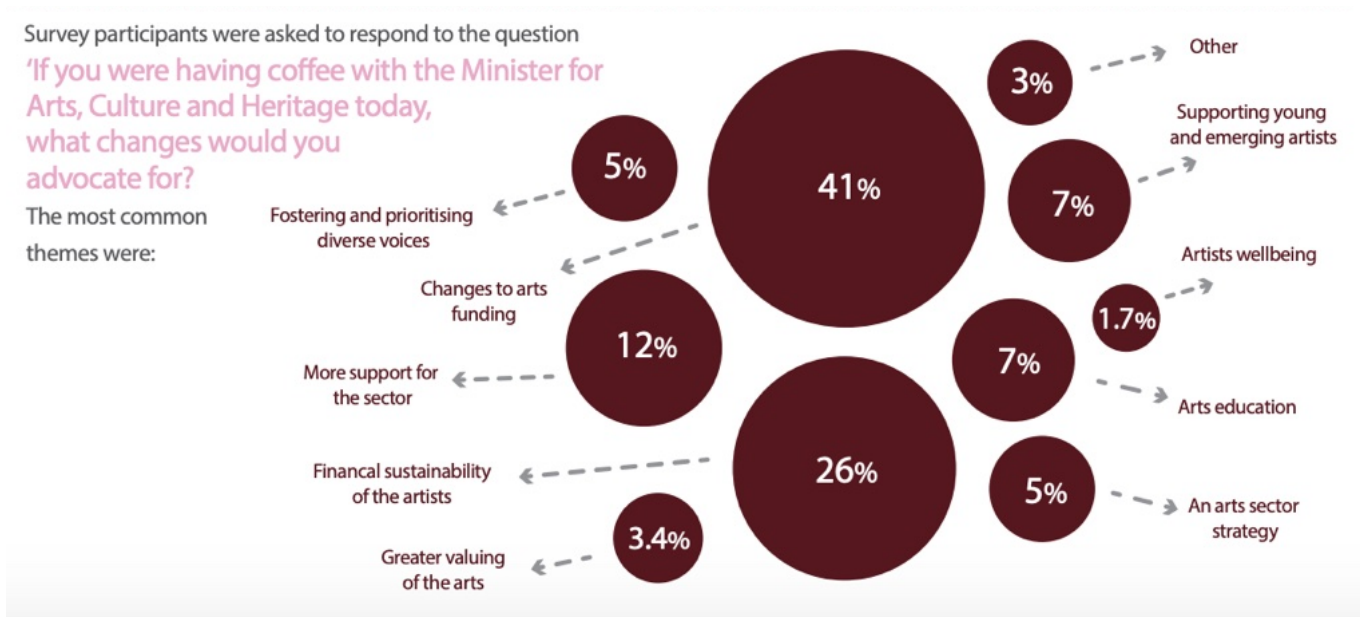
We know that these insights are useful for organisations as well as funders, but often our community organisations don't have the capacity or resources to do the research necessary to support their work. The goal through this element of our work is to create accessible and useful information that can be given back to communities to ensure that any research is reciprocal and contributes effectively to the people who contribute to the information.

Arts, creativity, and culture...give me a multifaceted connection with my community and the world, and this in turn gives me a sense of completeness, joy and peace.

Thank you for this opportunity to tell you how important the arts are in my life.

- Waikato resident

This research supports us to know what the sector is looking for, how we can find alternative ways to support the development of the sector, and provide insights to our community partners who serve as allies throughout the region.



CREATIVE WAIKATO TEAM

Our high performing team continues to serve our community through a wealth of sector knowledge, working from a basis of creative practice. With some additional short term contracts our team reached a peak of 16 people. This additional funding allowed us to grow our whanau of caring humans and to expand our impact around some specific projects and initiatives in alignment with our core vision. A number of these roles have been with specific project funding, and as this comes to an end we will see a reduction in our team size. 2023 will see a move to a slightly different team structure with various project funds, but our core strategic plan and community connection will be maintained.



Throughout the year we have seen a range of engagements for the team connecting with other community practitioners, different sectors, and opportunities for us all to grow and develop to ensure we continue to best serve our community through our openness and awareness. Some of the really stand-out sessions of internal development with our team have been a workshop about engaging with rainbow communities with Slay (Rainbow Hub), connecting with Deaf communities with Rachel (Equal Voices) and a workshop around how we use our voices to communicate with Julia (Wintec)



CREATIVE WAIKATO BOARD

Our board continues to effectively guide the strategic oversight of Creative Waikato and our work in, with, and for the arts, culture and creative sector. Sam Cunnane remains as board chair, and other than a slight change from Brian Squair as Deputy to Alex Wilkinson as Deputy Chair as of the September AGM, the board has remained the same.



2022-24

KEY STRATEGIC DIRECTION

Our strategic focus and direction for this time period remains consistent. There are initiatives in place that still have proven useful to the creative community. There are research projects planned that will continue to be utilised to expand our advocacy and our broader understanding of wellbeing and collective creative impact. There are pilot programmes in place with the additional central government funding that have been designed to align with our vision, to expand upon the strategic framework articulated through the Waikato Arts Navigator, and will provide useful resource and information, alongside positive change even if additional sustained funding for those programmes is not secured post 2023/24.

WAIKATO ARTS NAVIGATOR

Continued implementation of the Waikato Arts Navigator is a core part of our future work. This is a strategic plan to assist all local government authorities and the broader community ecosystem to align arts decision making for regional impact. We are continuing to work with councils and local arts organisations to utilise and enhance the strengths that have been identified through the research and development of this work. We will be strategically working to help design activity to work with the specific needs of each part of the region. By leading the project with aligned arts objectives for the whole region, this will allow for a more practical approach, resulting in a living and perpetual resource, rather than a strategy, which can be at the mercy of a 3-year political cycle. This should also look towards advocating for increased national investment.

ARTS AND WELLBEING

We will continue to advocate for the importance of the role that arts, culture and creativity play in individual and community wellbeing. Our recent research and work has strengthened our focus in this area, knowing that there is an important opportunity to develop the understanding around wellbeing and how it can be measured and enhanced. We know that the arts are a vital aspect of the lives of individuals and their communities. Arts and culture can help us to define and express ourselves, as well as engage with each other in our communities. They are powerful levers for promoting positive social change. We are utilising the results and reports from our recent work with Huber Social to now support our communities to use this information to support their own work - including the new community arts toolkit that can be utilised by all arts organisations to understand and measure their own impact on wellbeing.

CREATIVE CAPABILITY BUILDING

This will continue to be a core part of our work. There is continued need here, and we are working on updating these resources and digitising them for expanded accessibility and sustainability. This area has been a focus of the new Ministry of Culture and Heritage funding and there will be a growth in possibilities for creative capability development in the future.

TOI MĀORI SUPPORT

This is being driven by our Toi Māori specialist with support from the wider team. This is also supported through collaborative discussions with Waikato Tainui around their Toi visions, as well as connections through Te Tari o te Kīngitanga around a potential project for 2023 and how that can be implemented through our shared approach. We will continue to provide Toi development services, and some targeted workshop delivery.

PERFORMING ARTS STRATEGY

We are finalising a strategic project for the local performing arts ecosystem. This is looking at the role of the new theatre within the context of other local performing arts spaces. This looks at the collaborative potential, the pathways for practitioners, support and funding models, audience development and accessibility, and education and support services for the sector. Much like the Waikato Arts Navigator this strategy has been developed through community consultation and engagement. Drawing from a core working group of local professionals, but also ensure that all the potential different community groups who might utilise these spaces are a part of the discussion. This means making sure that all different arts and cultural forms are represented, as well as making sure that broader community organisations and cultural groups are part of the discussion to make sure that these spaces are accessible and thriving for the region.

EXPANDED DELIVERY AND COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

We are proactively targeting the diverse range of creatives in our region to ensure that they are finding the support they need for their mahi in their communities. This is through the activation of our programmes and resources, through additional regional engagement, and through collaborating with other organisations and initiatives. The scope for how we can deliver and broader connections with communities of practice are quite expansive if looking at arts, culture and creativity being a part of the everyday lives of all people. From that perspective we need to be strategic as an organisation to identify key partners in the community, to tell our stories clearly, and to ensure that our mahi remains as accessible as possible. By ensuring diverse communities are aware of the support we can offer, we can work with our different organisations to supplement their own community knowledge with our specialist sector knowledge. In some ways, this has been supported through online delivery in some respects, but also limited by the physical distancing requirements.

We are looking to support a vision for the sector where inclusivity and accessibility is key, and that flax-roots community initiatives can find the support they need to be active in their communities. Part of this work has been taking place through our advocacy work for increased community arts funding at local and national levels. Making formal submissions to funding organisations like Creative NZ and the Ministry of Culture and Heritage around the importance of funding allocations for regional activity, and targeted funding initiatives to support community arts activity from communities who have been traditionally neglected by arts funding bodies, including Nga toi Māori, Pacific, Asian, migrant, disabled and LGBTQI communities.



KEY OPPORTUNITIES FOR THE SECTOR

We are looking at challenges in our sector as opportunities to be addressed as we embrace our role as advocates and champions for the arts in the Waikato Region.

BROADER UNDERSTANDING OF ARTS, CULTURE AND CREATIVITY AS A PUBLIC GOOD

This is a continued opportunity to be explored at a national level. Creative Waikato have contributed to a new strength-based advocacy tool developed by researchers at The Workshop and the Creative NZ Advocacy Team. This is built around supporting advocates for the sector to lead upstream systemic change advocacy from a research-informed place. It supports the vision to solidify the role that arts, culture and creativity play in our lives and to work towards a comparable structure and support that sport enjoys in Aotearoa. The benefits for individuals and communities are comparable but the infrastructure is not as nationally robust. Part of this mahi is ideally supported by the arts communities telling their own stories of impact in a more aligned way.

ONGOING NATIONAL GOVERNMENT ENGAGEMENT

Creative Waikato has a growing national reputation, and through our ability to engage in continued development and research, we will be able to have an in-depth exploration of the impact of arts, culture and creativity within the wellbeing context. There are some substantial emerging opportunities for engagement with the Ministry for Culture and Heritage around value and impact measurement, as well as exploring opportunities with MSD, Te Whatu Ora, MoE, and other government bodies where arts can be engaged with as a solution provider. This is an area of slow development, but there is potential to strengthen the sector through collaborative opportunities.

FUNDING OF KEY ORGANISATIONS AND INFRASTRUCTURE

Part of the story around the increased government arts funding is that while it is well received and is enabling new possibilities, it is perhaps not as specific in filling systemic gaps. There is more work to be done in this area. We know that there has historically been a lack of national funding delivered to this region, and while this is slowly being addressed with increased funding into the area, there is risk around the sustainability of this. This may also be made more complex through inflation and how the cost of living impacts those artists and organisations providing important services that may be dropped off the funding list. There continue to be arts groups who are struggling to redefine themselves as sustainable organisations and finding new ways to connect with their communities. We are actively engaged in ongoing discussions around sustainability in the arts and we are playing a key role in the continued facilitation of these discussions, emphasising a regional and long-term sustainability approach. This is a key part of the Waikato Arts Navigator.

WAIKATO REGIONAL THEATRE

As was indicated last year, there is progress on the theatre – and it is exciting to see it taking shape. The final stages of the Performing Arts Strategy is being put in place, which will support planning and operational approaches, but also looks at the potential for collaborative elements across the creative ecosystem, as well as exploring the need for more government investment in this important pathway to wellbeing through access to spaces and creative activity. We have seen that there seems to be an increase in community engagement around the potential of the new theatre, as well as a continued growth in the development and presentation of locally made works which are utilising all the various conventional and non-conventional performance locations that we currently have available. Community organisations have stepped up through creating engaging local content over the past few years and this looks set to continue.

LOCAL GOVERNMENT

We continue to work with local government through the vision of The Waikato Arts Navigator. We see that there is potential for further engagement in alignment with the Future for Local Government Review, but there is more education and advocacy to be undertaken to support the more holistic understanding of how we weave creativity throughout local government as essential components of community infrastructure. Whilst we are a regional arts organisation, there is also the awareness of Hamilton as being a pathway for artists in the wider Waikato Region as part of their continued journey towards national and international arts excellence. There seems to be a growing openness towards community consultation in the context of the arts, as well as an increased understanding of the role that Creative Waikato plays as an advocate around the development of an arts strategy, and broader arts engagement from the Hamilton City Council and beyond. It will be interesting to see how things continue to unfold with the recently elected councils throughout the region.

PLACE MAKING

Placemaking and accessible creativity will continue to be an important part of the development of local communities. It inspires people to collectively reimagine and reinvent public spaces as the heart of every community. Strengthening the connection between people and the places they share. Humans are storytellers. We share through story. We understand through story. We inspire and make change through story. Urban spaces have the potential to be the canvas for those stories – through painting and murals, to sculpture and light, to music and dance and words and more. Our cities are a space for us to share local stories and to inspire conversations, and reflections. Also, by creating beautiful, vibrant, colourful spaces, we can allow space for moments of awe – which is vital for our mental health and wellbeing. This is an important role for the connection between local government and our artists and creatives.

Arts-informed placemaking can do powerful things to break down industrial silos, and demonstrate the broad value of moving beyond the narrow focus of any single profession, discipline, or agenda. It is about community connection, and grassroots involvement, and social procurement that engages with the local creative community, the results can be powerful and transformative. If we can support systems where collaborative processes can acknowledge the local expertise and engage with communities we can enhance the cultural literacy and creative activity of all of Aotearoa and support sustainable artistic careers alongside powerful and measurable wellbeing impact for broader societal benefit.

Ultimately the activation, and strategic implementation of the arts, culture and creative ecosystem within the future of local government will have a profound and transformative impact on our people. This is a vision for activity that:

- Is inclusive, accessible and participatory
- helps people grow aroha, social cohesion, connection and identity
- forges strong kaupapa, belonging and meaning.
- Shares local stories, values local knowledge and supports wellbeing
- Is embedded throughout the societal ecosystem and looks at systemic change
- It uplifts the mana of communities, making them stronger and healthier: environmentally, culturally, socially and economically.

We share a big thank you to our arts, culture and creativity community in the Waikato, as well as with our funders and core supporters. It is through your engagement that we are able to do the work we do. Thank you once again for your ongoing support, vision and kindness.

Creative Waikato | Toi Waikato is the regional arts organisation for the Waikato region, which includes 10 local authorities— Thames-Coromandel, Hauraki, Matamata- Piako, Waikato, Waipa, Hamilton, Waitomo, Otorohanga, South Waikato and Ruapehu. Our region also spans four Iwi—Waikato, Hauraki, Raukawa and Maniapoto.

We provide creative capability development for artists and arts organisations, strategic direction and support for sustainable arts, culture and creativity in our region. We operate strategically throughout the Waikato region to ensure that the impact of arts, culture and creativity on all people in our region is supported, accessible and valued.

Arts and creativity are integral to who we are as a dynamic, inclusive, and transformative region. When arts and creativity is strong and visible, communities are strong and visible. Our core work is intrinsically connected to wellbeing as a holistic concept. For Creative Waikato we build everything from an understanding that creativity is essential to a thriving humanity. It is how we understand who we are and how we connect to one another. Creativity must be interwoven through all facets of our wellbeing. This creates an intricately woven cloth which represents our collective experience. In it, we 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.

Our organisational strategy is developed alongside the Waikato Arts Navigator as a regional strategic framework. This framework has the vision for a Waikato Region that ***prosper with diverse and transformative creative activity.***

Within that we position our four strategic pou as our guiding approach to contributing to the regional vision. Those pou are:

ELEVATE | HĀPAI - We help you to succeed through advice, training and support.

CONNECT | TŪHONO - We connect you with people and places for stronger creative outcomes.

AMPLIFY | WHAKARAHI - We share stories far and wide and drive engagement with creative activity.

ADVOCATE | TAUNAKI - We stand up for the arts as they are essential to the wellbeing of our region.

What does this mean?

- The arts are valued and celebrated in our communities.
- Our region has robust and flourishing pathways for participation and audience engagement and our creative and artistic professionals.
- Ongoing sustainable development of a range of artistic and cultural activities throughout the region.
- The arts, artists, cultural organisations and creative activity is seen as being a vital part of the Waikato region and the wellbeing of its people.

Strategic Plan Summary 2022-24

2022 update

Our Vision

The Waikato prospers with diverse and transformative creative activity

Our Purpose

We are navigators who lead the elevation of creativity in our region and collaborate to provide opportunities for cultural well-being

ELEVATE HĀPAI	CONNECT TŪHONO	AMPLIFY WHAKARAHI	ADVOCATE TAUNAKI
<i>We help you to succeed through advice, training and support</i>	<i>We connect you with people and places for stronger creative outcomes</i>	<i>We share stories far and wide and drive engagement with creative activity</i>	<i>We stand up for the arts as they are essential to the well-being of our region</i>
Build Skills	Facilitate Connection	Promote Activity	Strategic Leadership
ArtReach delivery and development	Wellbeing projects	CW E-news and website	Waikato Arts Navigator
Creative development services	Ethnic and migrant arts support	Things to Do	Regional Festival and Venue Support
**Ministry Programme Delivery	**Artists in community opportunities	Intro to the Arts/ Arts stories	Value and Impact of Creativity
Support toi Māori	Creating Space	Grow Audiences	Advocacy
Creative Career support	Commission projects	**Audience Development	Funders/Regional Organisations
**Toi development services	Workshops, Networking and Events	Social Media campaigns	Local government
Toi research and collaboration	Communities of practice	**Everyday Creativity	Central government / CNZ / Ministries
Effective Funding	Connect our Region	Celebrate Creativity	Sustained Organisation
Hamilton Creative Communities fund	Regional cross-sector initiatives	Waikato Arts champions	Impact and Insights
Support regional CCS funds	Waikato art hub support	Connections to local and national media	Internal system enhancements
Support national funding applicants	**Creative Education	Thought Leadership	Regional Arts Network Aotearoa

** - indicates projects that have received additional targeted funding from Central Government Ministry initiatives.

Project	Description	Outcomes	2022-23 Updates
ArtReach	8 capability building training modules designed for artists and groups	90%+ participants rate as Useful or Very Useful	Ongoing and National interest in this programme through Regional Arts Network. Exploring new subject areas for expanding these modules. Working on digitisation and refresh in 2023
Creative development services	Creative Development team dedicated to working with artists to support development	400+ clients per annum	Ongoing with growing success and outreach into the region. Embedded into ArtReach and ELEVATE programmes.
**Ministry Programme Delivery	Development of ELEVATE Creative Careers Programme	Successful programme delivery for 240 participants over 2 years	Content developed and numbers growing. Offering online cohort for increased regional accessibility. Pilot extended until June.
Toi Creative Career Support	Training program for Māori artists wanting to develop an arts business model (Pakihi Toi and Elevate)	Growing participants and workshop development	Continues to be utilised, but also built into part of ELEVATE programme delivery - targeted Toi cohort in 2022
**Toi Development Services	Toi Māori Creative Development team dedicated to working with artists to support development	Continued activity and collaboration with Regional Māori organisations	New staff developing new networks. Strengthening partnerships in discussion with Waikato Tainui.
Toi research and collaboration	Research and evaluation of how to support Māori artists in the Waikato in hubs and online	New outcomes determined and support offered for Māori organisations in development	Project in development with HCC and The Office of the Kiingitanga for 2023
Creative Communities fund	Distribution of HCC CCS fund in two rounds	High quality applications received representing creative growth	Continued growth in quality applications and funding availability. Delivered full funding allocation this year.
Support regional CCS funds	Regional CCS funds supported by CW through mentoring and networking	Quality and number of applications to other Waikato funds increase	Mentoring from CW team to other assessment bodies in the region. Developing a best practice guide for this funding for other regional assessors
Support National Funding Applicants	Offer support and guidance for Waikato applicants for national funding opportunities	Quality and number of applications to national funds increase	We have provided an increased support of applicants for national funds in the last 12 months due to increased funding availability. Growing funding success rate from Waikato applicants.
Wellbeing Projects	Research and development of methodologies, measurement and discussion around well-being from an arts perspective.	Arts organisations understand how to articulate their impact in this area. Potential for collaborative work in the health and social sector.	Research project and report with Huber Social launched in 2022. Implementation of further research and community workshops and toolkit planned for 2023.

Ethnic and migrant arts support	Supporting the development and understanding of support needs and aspirations of arts for these communities	Working with other organisations to provide pathways for support.	This is a growth area, but again will be best suited through partnership and collaboration so it can be led by the community. Some support delivered through CCS support, creative development services and the ELEVATE Programme. Also a component of the Whiria Te Tangata project.
**Artists in Community	Supporting the development for opportunities to have artists in the community in the Waikato	Exploring through regional connection and other opportunities.	Cultural Activator pilot in South Waikato delivered throughout 2022. Whiria Te Taangata - a multi-community artist in residence project launched late 2022 to run for 12 months.
Commission Projects	Space to run community connected initiatives that lead social change	Examples include: Kotahitanga, Best Fest, School Kit, etc. One project per annum.	2022 included Creative Acts of Kindness and work on a Kotahitanga book to be launched early 2023
Workshops, Networking and Events	Offering one off workshops and masterclasses for the arts community	3 events per year	This is a new initiative for 2023 as we move into a post-covid environment. This is looking to support connection between practitioners whilst also providing capability building.
Communities of Practice	Supporting new networks of creatives in the local communities	Support through meeting hosting, strategic direction or initial connection of groups.	Different areas are being identified and connections for collaboration are being established. Working group for Waikato Performing Arts Strategy is a current example of this. Other support is offered for groups of collaborative artists looking for space and other activation.
Regional cross-sector initiatives	Collaborating in the region for cross-sector impact	Engagement in projects like the Waikato Wellbeing Project, and Waikato Plan	Collaborative discussions are in progress and new initiatives are being explored. Progress is slow.
Waikato art hub support	Feasibility study for developing an arts hub (artists working/exhibition space)	Plan in place to initiate programme in 2022/2023	Still being developed. Largely reliant on availability of space.
**Creative Education	Development of Creative Education programme of activity to support creative delivery in schools	Development and implementation of resources in Waikato Schools	Integrated Creativity Resource developed throughout 2022. Some initial testing with Waikato teachers, building towards further engagement in 2023.
CW e-news and website	Ongoing digital arts news service	12 publications per annum	New website and design launched in 2022. Very well received by the sector. Accessible and reliable content.

Things to Do	Ongoing events focused news services	26 publications per annum	These are also ongoing and looking at ways to best serve the audience for this. Linked with new design launched in early 2022.
Introduction to the Arts	Informative but fun articles on website and social media as a way of introducing different art forms – including interviews with professional artists.	5 publications per annum	This is a new development for 2023
**Audience Development	Exploring new approaches to Audience Development and building upon The Portal pilot programme	Development of new resources, working with local organisations, and exploring new approaches to engagement.	Developed a suite of resources and support material throughout 2022. Launched in early 2023.
Social Media campaigns	Ongoing management of facebook, Instagram and twitter	15% growth in followers per annum	This has been regularly growing. New social media strategy is in place. Growth area is in video content.
**Everyday Creativity	Supporting the development of creativity in the lives of people in the Waikato through fun activity and arts engagement	Online content delivery and an increase in creative activity.	This is a new initiative for 2023
Waikato Arts Champions / Arts publication	New approach for celebrating contributions to the creative sector. This may take the form of a 'yearbook' eventually, but will start through online content	Video work, podcast, resource development and panel discussions.	Still to be developed in 2023-24. Need to determine feasibility and purpose of this activity.
Connections to local and national media	More coverage of arts news, stories, and creative activity from the Waikato.	Consistent increase in positive arts stories	There has been more arts writing in the past 12 months, but there is still scope for consistency and a more robust critical engagement.
Thought Leadership	Articles about important issues in the arts, as well as discussions around the value and impact of the arts are published	5 articles per annum. Growing regional and national recognition.	This has been a continued growth area for 2022 and is supporting the growing national reputation of the organisation. The goal is to share clear thoughts around the role of arts culture and creativity in the region. Largely occurring through online publications.
Waikato Arts Navigator	Framework for LGAs to value and invest in their local arts sector	LGAs increase arts investment and adapt robust arts planning processes	This programme has become a regional arts strategy and has been consulted with all councils in the LTP process in 2021. Continued engagement and implementation will be through 2023/2024

Regional Festival and Venue Support	Offering support to key regional arts festivals to support continued development	Support for local and regional festivals and venues in development. Supporting strategic engagement and activation	CW will continue to support these festivals and the ongoing work they are doing. This also includes developments around the Waikato Regional Theatre and other venues through the Performing Arts Strategy.
Value and Impact of Creativity	Research and publication of formal writing in regard to impact and value from Regional understanding for national advocacy	5 articles published per annum	This is connected to thought leadership and national advocacy discussions with CNZ and MCH. Contributing to work through national forums.
Funders/Regional Organisations	CW supports collaborative regional initiatives	Contributions to local and regional collaborative initiatives - Wellbeing Project, Waikato Plan, etc.	CW will continue to be involved in discussions around this type of collaborative work, and advocating for the role of arts and creativity in diverse spaces.
Local Government	CW provides strategic support and guidance through the Waikato Arts Navigator	Support for council led initiatives and strategic advice	In response to LTP engagement, councils of focus will be South Waikato, Hauraki, Ruapehu, and HCC. There is more advocacy to be undertaken around the support of arts, culture and creativity in our communities.
Govt/CNZ/Ministries	Working with key stakeholders to help them understand arts impact	Arts are valued and investment increased in the region	This has been ongoing. Formal submissions to the Ministry of Culture and Heritage Long-Term Insights briefing, Creative NZ Arts Council, and the Future of Local Government review panel. Development discussions around future funding focus and scope with MCH.
Impacts and Insights	Identifying how to measure impact of organisation and how to support that knowledge sharing	Looking at the broader impact of our work, how that supports team development, and how we serve our communities through collective impact.	This is being developed, and research is being connected through our planned work. This is connected to Huber Social research, as well as internal implementation of initiatives.
Internal system enhancements	Continuously enhance and sustain internal systems to improve efficiency and effectiveness of Creative Waikato.	All Creative Waikato systems to empower staff and aid in ease of workflow, knowledge sharing and mitigating organisation risk.	CRM has been designed, activated and is being implemented and updated for ease of use. Project management systems in place to allow ease of workflow.
RANA	Connection with the network of regional arts organisations	Exploring shared networks and formalised advocacy	Development of new web presence with collaborative engagement with CNZ and MCH. This includes submissions to MCH around a more formal establishment and support of Regional Arts Organisations in a similar level of support as the RST model.

Outside of these core projects and areas of focus, we remain adaptable for other opportunities and collaborative cross-sector work.

Potential connections here are: CNZ (Te Ropu Mana Toi); The Meteor Theatre (Boil Up mentoring programme); National co-operation of Regional Arts Development Organisations through CNZ; Waikato DHB; Wintec Research Office; Hamilton City Council (Arts Policy); Department of Corrections; Momentum Foundation; Creative Thinking Project; Waikato Well-being Project; etc.