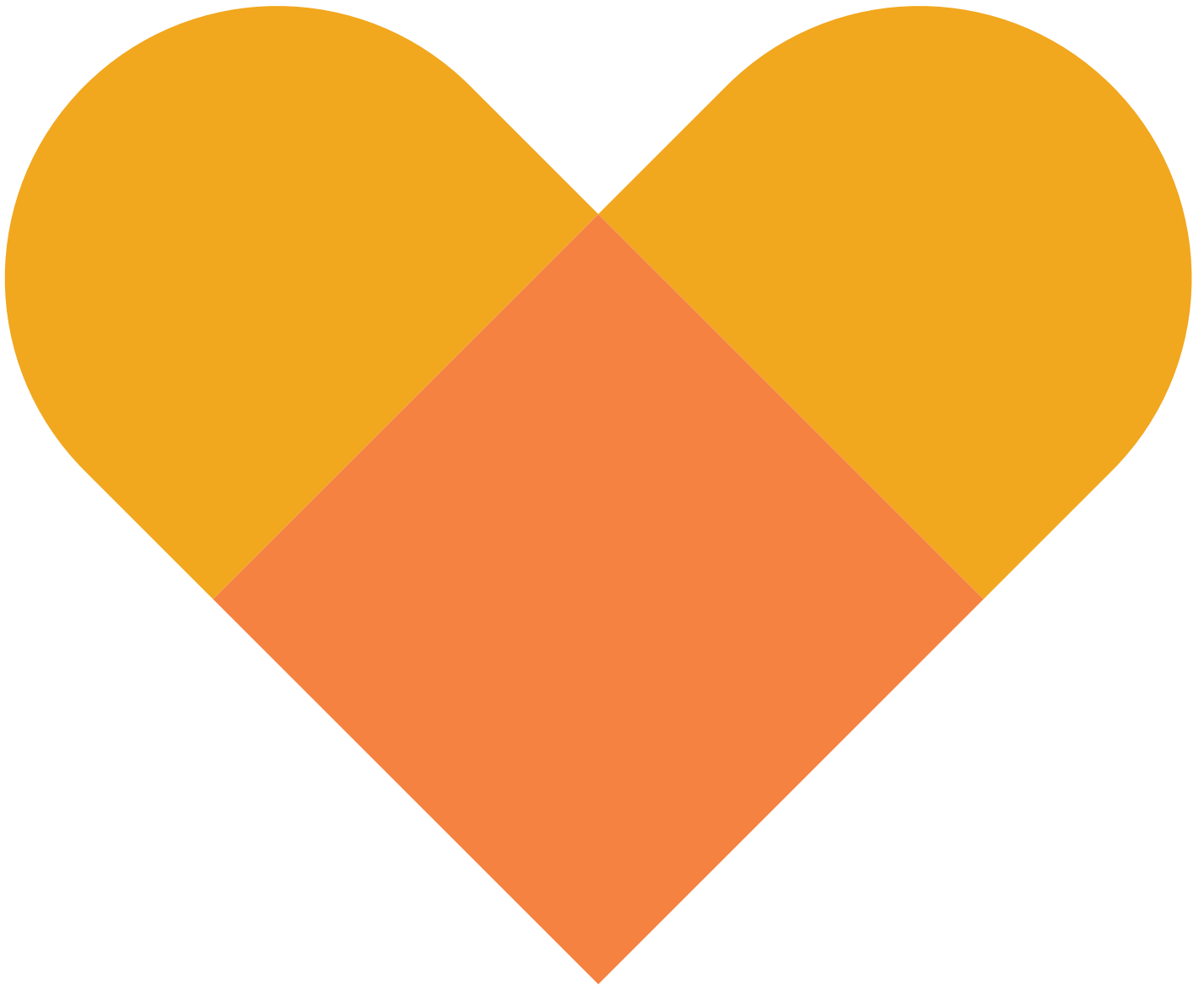


# Accessibility, Diversity & Inclusion



E tīo te tūi,  
e ketekete te  
kākā, e korihi  
te kōkako

It takes many  
instruments  
to make a  
symphony

## Our diverse and dynamic community

Despite many of our best efforts, some parts of our communities remain invisible to us.

These are the people who may be interested in or even love what we offer, but face barriers that stop or limit their engagement – as audience members, artists or co-creators.

These barriers may be because of lack of information on our websites about accessibility, lack of representation at all levels or because we offer up images and language that, often unknowingly, prevents some people from feeling welcome, safe and included.

Oftentimes it may come down to the fact some people don't see themselves in what we offer, and therefore do not feel welcome or included.

Many of these barriers can be easily broken down and provide us many benefits in doing so. And not just with the potential audience growth, but also with opportunities for us to innovate and collaborate in new and exciting ways.

Because here we are referring not just to their participation as audience members, but also, crucially, as participators in what we do—in our workshops and classes, in creation of our events, gigs and productions, as participants, visible voices and representatives in our creations, as co-collaborators and co-creators.

Creative Waikato's Performing Arts Strategy identified some key points and advice for our local creatives operating in the performing arts space, such as “having passionate, educated front of house staff, diverse narratives and languages and more characters in shows that reflect our communities”.

Our communities are already increasingly diverse and dynamic, and when we open our doors and welcome everyone within our community, we invite fresh perspectives to what we do, and allow more diverse stories to be told. In this way, our community is then truly reflected in our offerings, and we enhance our ecosystem, and in turn, our creative sector flourishes.

Think of this as future proofing. Are you wanting to engage more youth, more diverse cultures, more women or fresh perspectives in your organisation? Are you wanting to ensure your organisation adapts with the changing times and its legacy continues well into the future?

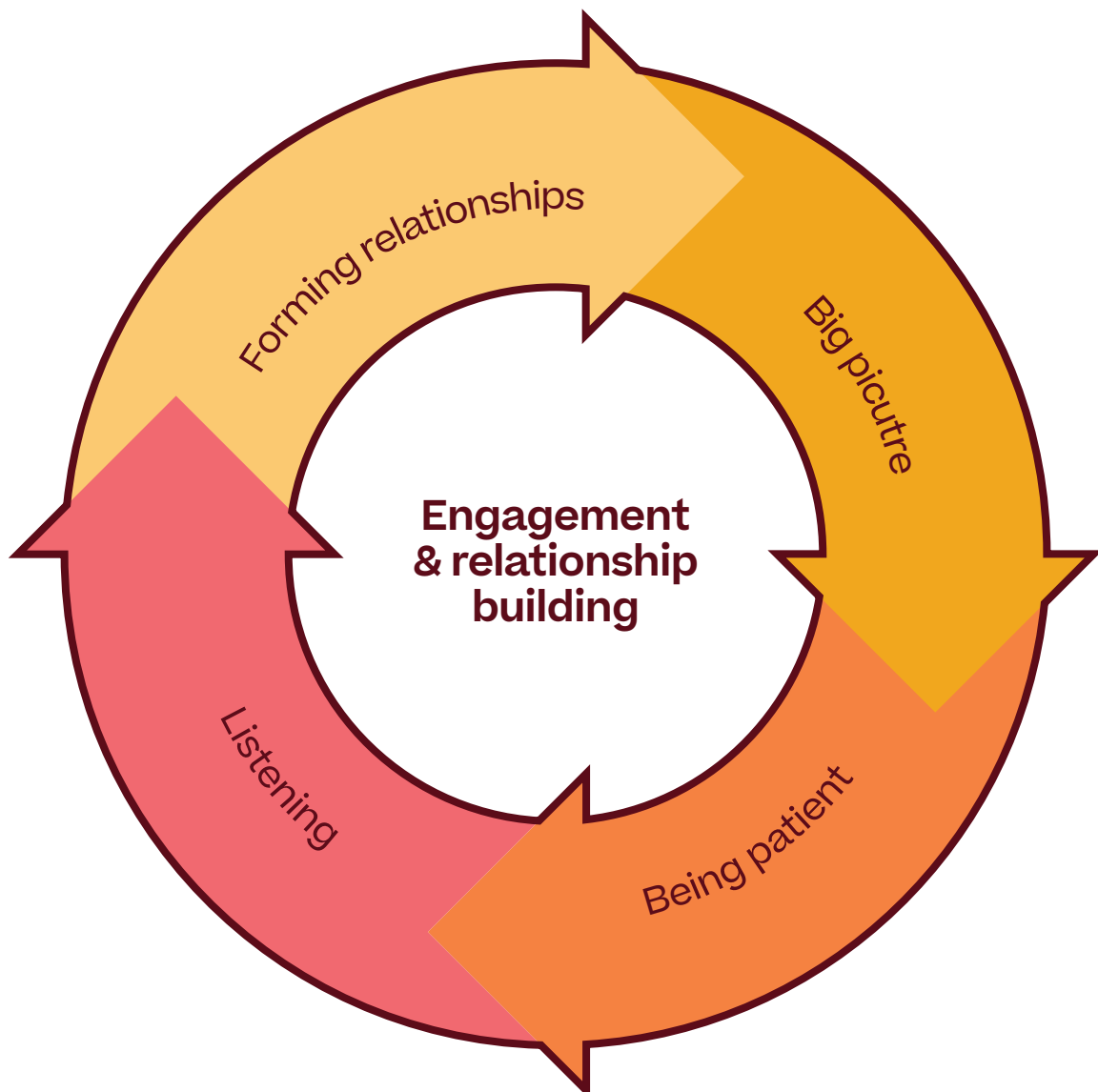
The reality is we must embrace diverse perspectives, because unless these people see themselves reflected in and welcomed into your organisation with agency, it's unlikely they'll want to join you. When our creative ecosystem is truly thriving, there is fair access and space created for diverse voices.

## Access

It is vital to consider access at the earliest stages in planning, and not just as an afterthought.

The best way to look at being more inclusive and accessible to the different communities that we seek to engage with, is to go directly to those communities, and find a way to start a conversation. This might be by approaching a representative organisation, or through a contact we have (see Useful links below).

This process of engagement and relationship building may take time. It will require keeping an eye on the big picture, being patient, listening, and working towards forming genuine relationships with the communities and voices you seek to connect with and embed.

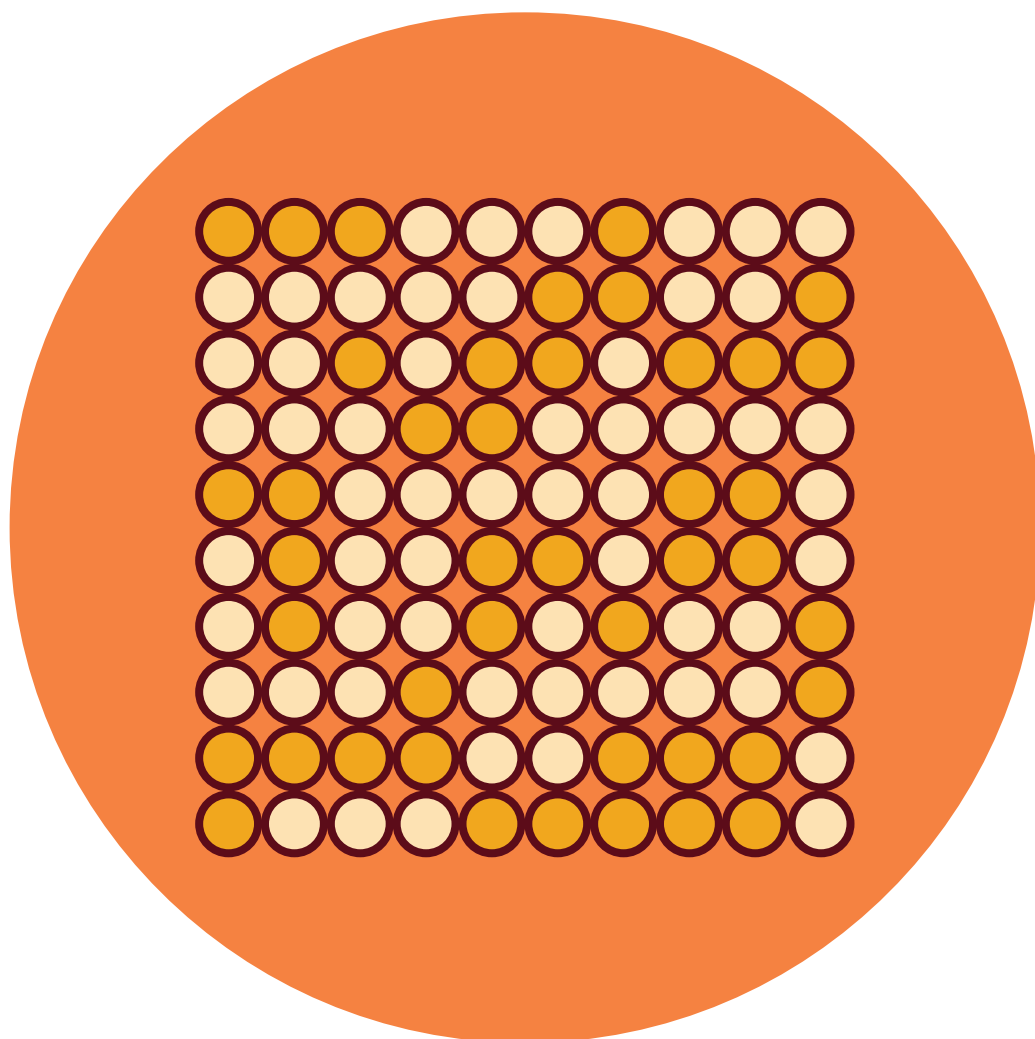


Think about  
the richness  
of what people  
with disabilities  
can bring.

Kim Dyball  
YouthABLE

## Those in our community living with disability

You, me, and everyone we know will experience some sort of disability in our lifetimes, either because of illness, an accident, or old age. According to the Audience Atlas research (2020), around 43% (1.7 million people) currently “have at least ‘some difficulty’ engaging with arts and culture.”



Statistics New Zealand research tells us around 484k people have hearing or vision loss that hearing aids and glasses don't eliminate, and approximately 22,986 people use New Zealand Sign Language.

Around 7% have 'unseen' access needs, with a disability that you may not be able to see, such as learning or developmental challenges. Having an awareness of this and a willingness to work with all people who present in their unique and various ways will go a long way. Easy Read formats may be something to look at to help a variety of diverse people navigate our spaces. Easy Read guidelines allow greater access for all people who struggle with written English – those with learning disabilities, sight challenges, elderly people, Deaf people, those with low literacy or English as a second language. A link to an Easy Read guide is at the end of this resource.

As Robyn Hunt summarises so well, Creative New Zealand research *New Zealanders and the Arts (2020)* show us:

**67% of disabled people attended arts events in the previous year, in line with the national average (68%)**

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However, they attended Pacific arts and literary arts events more than most. They also attend arts events significantly more frequently – with

**29% attending arts events eleven or more times a year (the national average is 24%)**

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The findings also show that disabled people participate in the arts more than the national average across all artforms.

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**61% of disabled people participated in the arts in the previous 12 months, a figure that's significantly higher than the national average (52%)**

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In addition, they participate in the arts more regularly.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> <https://artsaccess.org.nz/arts%20blog/robyn-hunt-and-whaikaha>



These audiences like to “plan activities in advance, book ahead out of necessity, bring family and friends and become repeat attendees and enthusiastic participants if the facilities are accessible and staff are welcoming”.<sup>2</sup>

The most common barriers they encounter are:

Venue staff attitudes

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Inaccessible marketing  
and advertising

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Inaccessible venue

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Transport and/or parking

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Cost of tickets for themselves  
and their companion


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Inaccessible events or programmes  
(e.g. not being able to read labels in  
a museum or hear a book reading)

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You may not be able to produce the ideal scenario for all people for all sorts of reasons, but a positive starting point is clearly demonstrating through your website, marketing and promotions that you’re keen to engage with disabled people. It’s having and leading with a positive, willing and inclusive mindset.

<sup>2</sup> <https://artsaccess.org.nz/arts-for-all-guide>



**As Kim Dyball, founder of Waikato organisation YouthABLE, says:**

**“We know the world isn’t perfect... but we want to partner and work with people to see what might be possible”**

**Partnership is key. If you want to understand the experiences of Deaf and disabled people, what events they’d like to participate in and attend, their accessibility issues etc, the best place to start is by talking directly with them**

## Accessibility Policy

An accessibility policy outlines your commitment to accessibility and is an excellent place to start on your accessibility journey.

There is guidance available on the Arts Access Aotearoa website on how to write an accessibility policy, and also of how your policy will then inform an Action Plan.

Below is their helpful example for how a policy objective (providing staff training on disability responsiveness) looks like as an Action Plan.

In 2020, we will:

Ask all staff and volunteers to read *Arts For All* and then seek their feedback on what we can implement

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Provide disability responsiveness training for all staff and volunteers

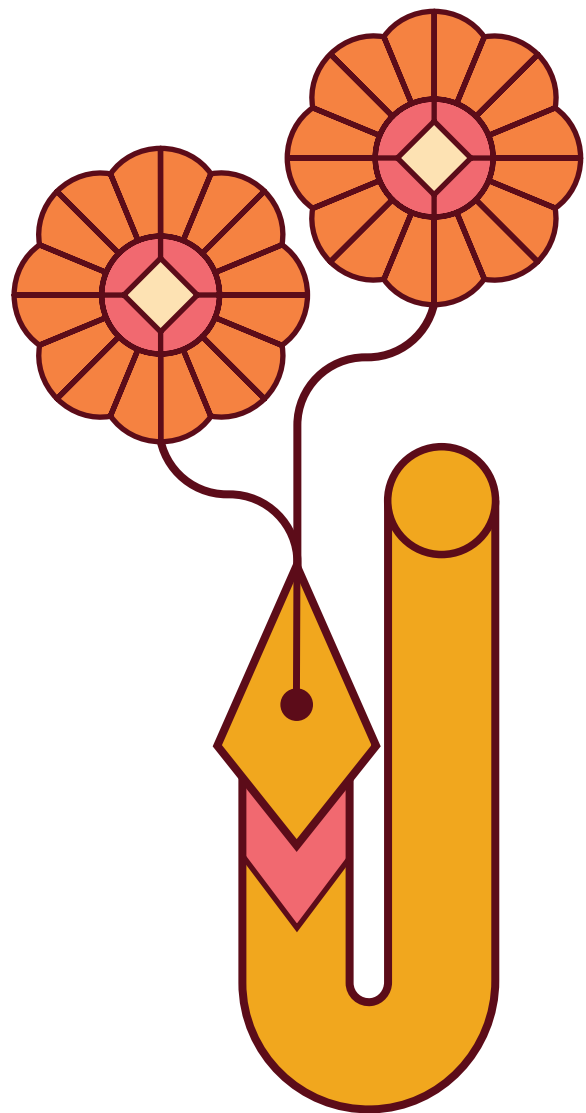
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Provide and publicise a range of ways for audiences and visitors to give feedback to staff on their experience of our events

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Respond to audience feedback and take positive action, where possible

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## Tips

Once you've written an accessibility policy, perhaps you'd like to make it available or visible on your website?

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You may find there is little uptake from the disabled community if you only put your energy into one-off accessible events over genuine and long term relationships

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For many people in our community, overly stimulating spaces can be triggering. In this instance, people still want to experience all the wonderful offerings the creative sector can provide, but they may need 10 minutes in a calm and neutral space to rebalance. These types of spaces are becoming more and more common in venues and spaces overseas

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Arts Access Aotearoa have created a thorough and comprehensive guide on accessibility in the arts called *Ngā toi mō te katoa: Arts For All*. This excellent resource outlines the benefits of marketing the arts to Deaf and disabled people, and includes both practical and longer-term steps you can take to provide access. See Useful links at the end of this document for a direct link

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## Questions to consider



Do you have accessible car parks available but these aren't mentioned on your website?

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Is there a green space or park nearby for those with guide dogs?

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## Cultural diversity

New Zealand is one of the most ethnically diverse countries in the world, and based on current trends, will continue to become more and more diverse as our population grows.

The known benefits to embracing our increasing cultural diversity, called ‘the diversity dividend’, are innovation, strengthened international ties, and better productivity. We would also add, diverse perspectives and richer experiences for all.



“The benefits of diversity are more likely to occur in contexts where people are open and engaged with each other and where there is underlying trust. This means that creating opportunities for meaningful connections and mutual understanding between diverse peoples is important for New Zealand. It is important for our stability and harmony, our prosperity and our shared sense of belonging and nationhood.”<sup>3</sup>

In the Waikato, we have a diverse community: Māori, Pākehā, Indian, Chinese, Filipino, South American, Pasifika (Samoan, Tongan, etc), Somali, among many others. Do you see diverse faces in your spaces and at your events?

Again, an important signal for the diverse cultures you’d like to see in your audiences is if they can see themselves reflected in what you do.

The best way to engage with these communities is to approach them directly, and ask them. You may find they have some surprising obstacles that you’ve never considered.

For example, for many cultural groups, particularly Māori and Pasifika, kai (food) plays a very important role in gatherings. Sharing food is not only important to demonstrate manākitanga (hospitality), but the rituals and customs around kai create a sense of community.

Some spaces, particularly venues and spaces for hire, have strict rules around who can provide food, and even if food is permitted full stop. For those who don’t know, this can be a major barrier.

For kapa haka groups, who invest many many volunteer hours and money from their own pockets in order to travel to compete or showcase their talent, their own supporter-run food trucks and stalls are vital fundraising arms to their sustainability.

**In the Waikato, we have a diverse community: Māori, Pākehā, Indian, Chinese, Filipino, South American, Pasifika (Samoan, Tongan, etc), Somali, among many others**

<sup>3</sup> <https://www.ethniccommunities.govt.nz/assets/Resources/26250b4a76/StrategicDirectionOct2016.pdf>

## Questions to consider



If you want to encourage more engagement from different cultures, are you prepared for and have you made space for the different perspectives they bring?

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What are some of the obstacles people from different cultures may have?

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Who can you ask?

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How can you start to build a relationship with different cultures?

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Who is already connected to these cultures, and can you partner or collaborate with these organisations?

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How might this change your programming or curating of what you offer?

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## Gender equality

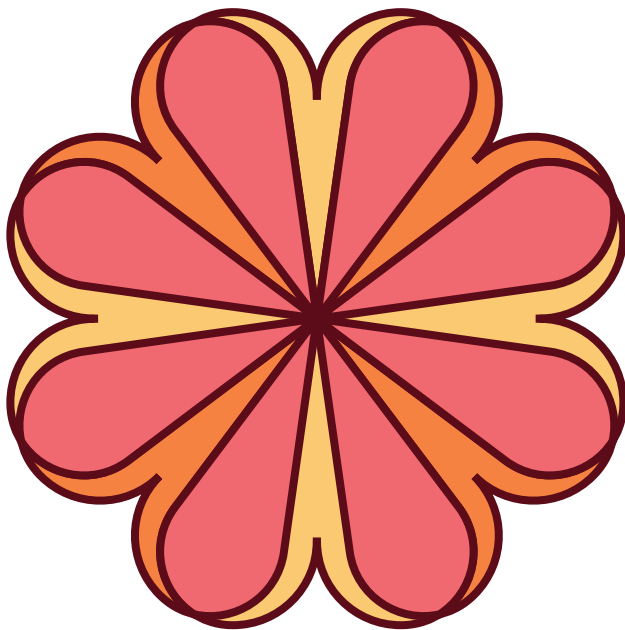
Essentially, gender equality is about human rights – the right for each and every individual to make the most of their talents, wishes and abilities, to flourish as the best they can be.

We can see a future where all tamariki are encouraged and offered training in any area that appeals to them – in stage lighting, drum kits, jewellery making, DJing – no matter what gender norms existed in the past.

There is already much of this goodness happening, and we see and hear stories all the time of increased opportunities for all.

However, the evidence from Gender Equal NZ's Gender Attitudes Survey (2021) shows Covid has undermined some of the gains made in this space, therefore we can't afford to get complacent.

The best way to ensure gender equality expands and continues is if each of us enquire deeply as to what barriers we may be unconsciously supporting in our mahi.



## Questions



What might gender equality mean in your creative world?

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In what ways is your space/activity aware of, supportive of and welcoming of gender equality?

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When you look around you, do you see a variety of genders in different roles?

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Are you ensuring the opportunities you offer are welcoming of all genders, despite the dominance of traditional gender roles from the past?

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Are young people seeing women in roles or spaces that were traditionally male dominated ones in your organisation – and visa versa for men?

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## Gender diversity

While the term ‘gender diversity’ may be a new term for some of us, gender diversity is something that has “existed throughout history and across cultures”.<sup>4</sup>

Gender diverse people are those who identify and express themselves in ways that are not constrained by the cultural binary of ‘male’ / ‘female’.

<sup>4</sup> Te Ara, The Encyclopaedia of New Zealand <https://teara.govt.nz/en/gender-diversity/page-1>

Gender diversity is about accepting that there are many ways to identify oneself outside of this binary. This is not necessarily connected to a particular sexual orientation, as gender-diverse people can be “heterosexual, bisexual, homosexual, or have any other sexual orientation”.<sup>5</sup>

The key is authenticity, and for gender-diverse people to genuinely be who they are in the world. This means they may be fluid in their expression of genders, or choose to identify with no gender at all.

In New Zealand gender-diversity includes but is not limited to<sup>6</sup>:

Transgender people – a specific identity, but also an umbrella term to encompass all those whose gender identity does not align with the sex assigned to them at birth

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Drag queens, drag kings and cross-dressers, who often dress in ways considered socially appropriate for the ‘other’ gender, including as a performance

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Māori and Pacific genders, such as *whakawāhine*, *tangata ira tāne* and *irawhiti takatāpui* (Māori), *fa’afafine* and *fa’atama* (Samoan), *fakaleiti* (Tongan), *‘akava’ine* (Cook Islands), *māhū* (Hawaiian), *vaka sa lewa lewa* (Fijian), *rae rae* (Tahitian) and *fiafifine* (Niuean) – some of these terms are embraced by the community, while others are considered to be slurs in some contexts

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5 & 6 Te Ara, The Encyclopaedia of New Zealand <https://teara.govt.nz/en/gender-diversity/page-1>

Intersex people, who are born with variations of sex characteristics. Their reproductive or sexual anatomy does not fit the typical binary (either/or) definitions of female and male

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Non-binary, gender fluid and gender nonconforming people – a range of identities that are not exclusively girls/women or boys/men, or who do not identify with any fixed gender, including (but not limited to) pangender, bigender, gender fluid, gender nonconforming

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Because gender-diversity has not yet been embraced by mainstream society, many people who identify as such “have tended to remain in their own communities and they have often felt isolated”.<sup>7</sup>

But it doesn't need to be this way.

What if in our creative mahi we were innovative in our inclusiveness and approaches to gender diversity?

As Slay, from Rainbow Hub Waikato puts it so eloquently:

“The Waikato is so full of talent!... many people from the rainbow community hold back because they don't feel like they will be accepted. But imagine what might be possible if they did feel welcomed and accepted for who they are?! I myself have a very high voice and an equally high kick – but I feel I wouldn't be welcome to audition for roles of any gender due to gender norms. But what if it was different? What if roles were won based on talent alone?”

Inclusivity of gender-diverse people not only benefits and enhances their lives, it benefits and brightens all of our lives, and offers creative innovation in ways we may not have considered yet.

<sup>7</sup> Te Ara, The Encyclopaedia of New Zealand <https://teara.govt.nz/en/gender-diversity/page-1>

Accessibility, in my view, is really not about 'things' and 'stuff'.

It's really about a mindset. And once the mindset is there, then things can change.

Robyn Hunt ONZM  
Writer, activist, podcaster  
and co-founder of Crip the Lit

## Tips

It's far more important to accept and respect gender-diverse people's choices about how they live and express themselves, than to understand and know every type of gender identity that exists

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Follow the lead from the gender-neutral person in terms of their pronouns and how they refer to themselves. Ask them how they would like to be referred. A willingness to want to be respectful will go a long way. Your good-faith attitude is more important than getting it wrong on occasion, as you learn to navigate language in new ways

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As much as possible, embracing gender-neutral terms over traditional gendered ones will help gender-diverse people gain acceptance, visibility and inclusion in our society

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## Questions



Can you create gender neutral bathrooms in your spaces and venues by removing “male” and “female” signs, and find an alternative fun and inclusive gender-neutral sign?

Consider this experience from one of our Waikato gender-diverse whānau “I personally dress very ‘fem’ when I go out because this is who I am and how I express myself authentically, but this creates a lot of anxiety about which toilet I should use – do I use the women’s or the men’s? Neither feels like a safe option. Therefore I just don’t go out unless I know there are non-gendered toilets available – and there are hardly any venues in Hamilton that have non-gendered toilets. It’s not just me, the toilet issue can cause trauma for people”.

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Can you consider including gender-diverse people and their needs/perspectives in planning your events, performances, workshops?

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What small or big changes could you make that could have an innovative and exciting impact on your mahi – and have huge positive ramifications in the lives of these often-marginalised people?

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## Final thoughts

Keep the bigger goal in mind

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A genuine commitment to allowing diversity to flourish is like making a garden

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First you have to prepare the garden bed by making some space, then you have to form genuine relationships – which are like planting your seeds

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You will then need to water those seeds with commitment, patience and an open mind, allowing the time it takes for them to blossom

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Remember, it will be worth all the attempts you make, for the more diversity we see in our creative sector, the more relevant, dynamic, innovative and genuinely reflective of our community our mahi will be

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## Useful links

### The United Nations Foundation

 [unfoundation.org](https://unfoundation.org)

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### Arts Access Aotearoa

 [artsaccess.org.nz](https://artsaccess.org.nz)

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### Ngā toi mō te katoa: Arts For All guide

 [artsaccess.org.nz/Arts-For-All-guide](https://artsaccess.org.nz/Arts-For-All-guide)


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### YouthABLE

 [youthable.co.nz](https://youthable.co.nz)


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### Guide to Easy Read Information

 [odi.govt.nz/guidance-and-resources/a-guide-to-making-easy-read-information](https://odi.govt.nz/guidance-and-resources/a-guide-to-making-easy-read-information)

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### Rainbow Hub, Waikato

 [rainbowhubwaikato.org.nz](https://rainbowhubwaikato.org.nz)

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### RainbowYOUTH

 [ry.org.nz](https://ry.org.nz)

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### Gender Equal NZ

 [genderequal.nz](https://genderequal.nz)

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### The Change Over

 [thechangeover.org](https://thechangeover.org)

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### Diversity rider examples

 [thechangeover.org/resources/inclusion-riders](https://thechangeover.org/resources/inclusion-riders)

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An environment  
free of racism,  
sexism,  
homophobia,  
xenophobia,  
ageism, ableism,  
and transphobia  
will ensure  
everyone feels  
welcome.

Disclaimer in promotional  
material for Shadow  
Work – Nivara Lounge  
October 2020

