

Performing Arts Strategy



**Creative
Waikato
Toi Waikato**

Contents

Introduction	2
History	8

Strategy development process

What is this about?	16
Who is it for?	17
How did we approach this work?	20
Link to the Waikato Arts Navigator	22
Five threads of the Waikato Arts Navigator	24
Arts and cultural ecosystem	26

Context

Te Ao Maaori	30
Four generations of Performing Arts Centres	32
The Performing Arts Economy	34
What are performing arts?	38

The vision for performing arts

The Vision	42
Te Tiriti and Partnership	46
Principles	48
Values	51
Long-term focus areas	52
Te Whare Tapa Whā	54
Connection	56
Community	62
Capital	68
Creativity	74
Performing arts ecosystem	80

Where to from here

Where to from here?	84
Who we talked with	86

Introduction

The Waikato performing arts sector and the arts and culture ecosystem as a whole is on the verge of change.

With the construction of the new Waikato Regional Theatre in our midst, there is an opportunity to build upon the strengths of local performing arts activity, which can in turn elevate the sector and help to bring about wider societal, social and economic change.

The performing arts sector has been deeply affected by the covid pandemic, with the cancellation of shows and venues being closed for long periods. The mental toll of rescheduling and the continued need to be reactive to pandemic restrictions has been demanding. However, the sector has shown resilience in its ability to adapt and rethink in order to continue to serve their communities and to explore what this sector might look like moving forward.

The Performing Arts Strategy has been developed through broad consultation with the performing arts sector and beyond, utilises community voices to inform the framework, and has been supported by Momentum Waikato in alignment with the development of The Waikato Regional Theatre.



Because this body of work is connected with arts, culture and creativity in the Waikato region, it is important that it is also aligned with the Waikato Arts Navigator (the Waikato's Regional Arts Strategy) in providing a framework for how the sector can contribute to the overall vision that:

The Vision

The Waikato
thrives with
diverse
and
trans-
formative
creative
activity*



There is an exciting opportunity to build on the cross-fertilisation of the various arts groups, artists, venues and facilities that sit within the wider performing arts ecosystem of the Waikato Region. This ecosystem is vibrant, creative and contributes to the cultural wellbeing of the region.



We must build upon the strength, diversity and history of the performing arts community of Hamilton and the wider Waikato Region.

As we look to the future, it is timely to reimagine a sector that is emboldened with the uniqueness that the Waikato performing arts has to offer, and embracing of the diverse, dynamic and agile communities which it serves.



Fostering an environment which enables communities to see themselves in all forms of performing arts activity, into the future — one of prosperity, hope and inclusiveness.

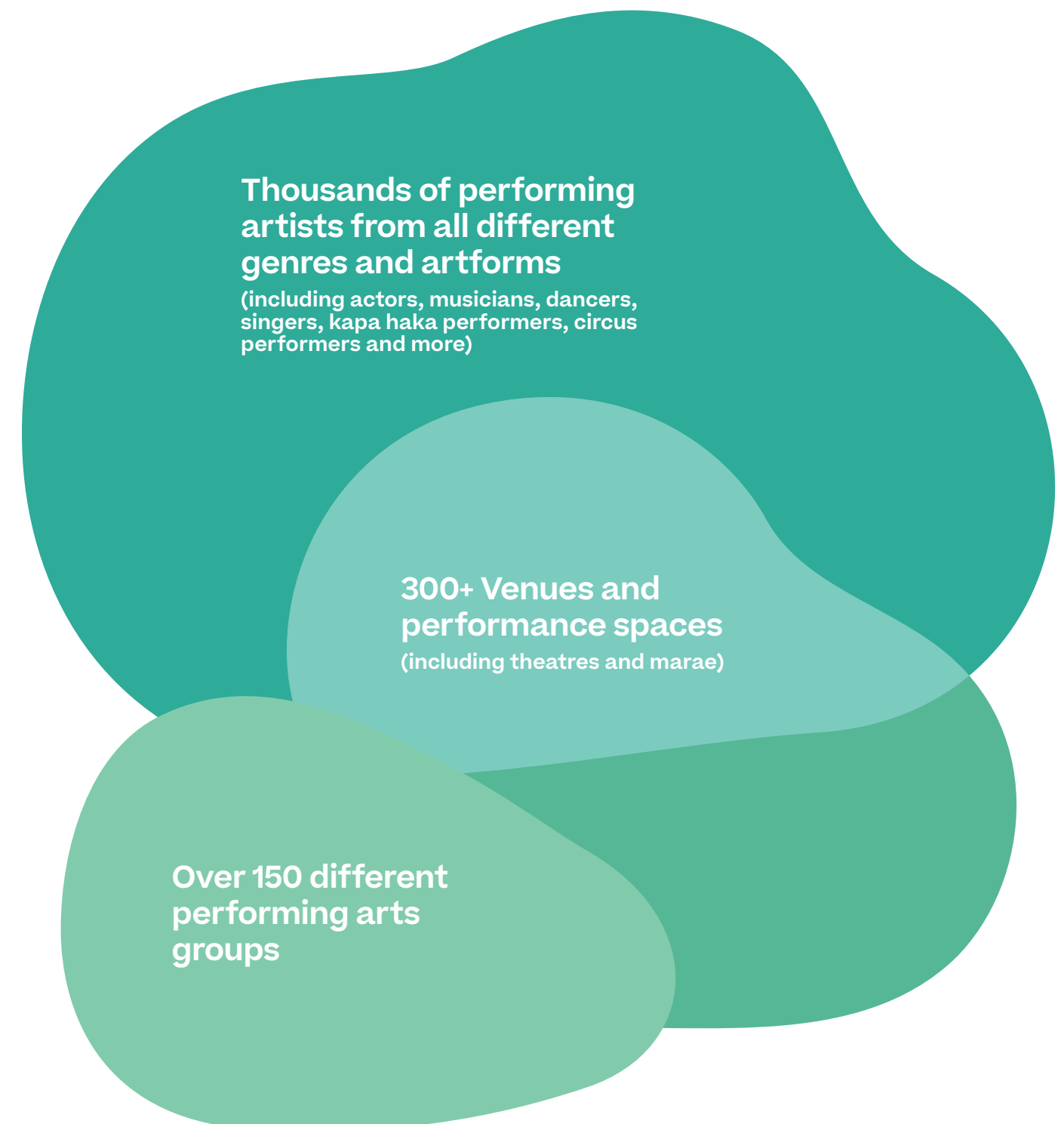
History

A brief and incomplete history of the Performing Arts in the Waikato.

Whilst the impetus for this strategy initially came from the establishment of the Waikato Regional Theatre, there was a wider opportunity to look at how this theatre would sit within the greater performing arts eco-system, that is, all the performing arts venues, theatres and activity that currently exist.

The Waikato region has had a long and varied history of performing arts activities, groups, individuals and spaces. This has seen the development of a broad range of artists, many of whom have gone on to national and international acclaim. Performing arts activity can take place in many different environments and at its core is activated by passionate people sharing stories and entertaining one another.

It is hard to accurately count the number of people and spaces that can be found in the Waikato but a starting picture looks like:



Some recent theatrical events

The gifting of The Meteor to the One Victoria Trust

Investigation into remedial and development work for Founders Theatre to be undertaken in the 2015-2016 financial year*

Momentum Waikato works with support from Creative Waikato to engage in community consultation to develop a new Waikato Regional Theatre (WRT)

Waikato Regional Property Trust (WRPT), which owns the theatre, formed via the appointment of its first trustees in October

2014

2015

2016

2017

2018

The gifting of the Clarence Street Theatre to the Clarence Street Theatre Trust

Closure of Founders Theatre for safety reasons

The Riverlea Theatre Trust purchased the land for their theatre from HCC

Hamilton City Council to fund \$25million and Hamilton Hotel site on South end of Victoria Street identified as the preferred site

Hamilton City Council committed to providing annual \$1.1million maintenance for twenty years, in addition \$12million from the Central Government Provincial Growth Fund went into the construction of the Theatre. Taking funds raised to a preliminary target of \$69million, allowing the project to commence**

*Hamilton City Theatres review — hamilton.govt.nz/our-city/facilities/hamiltontheatres
**Waikato Regional Theatre project history — momentumwaikato.nz/project-history

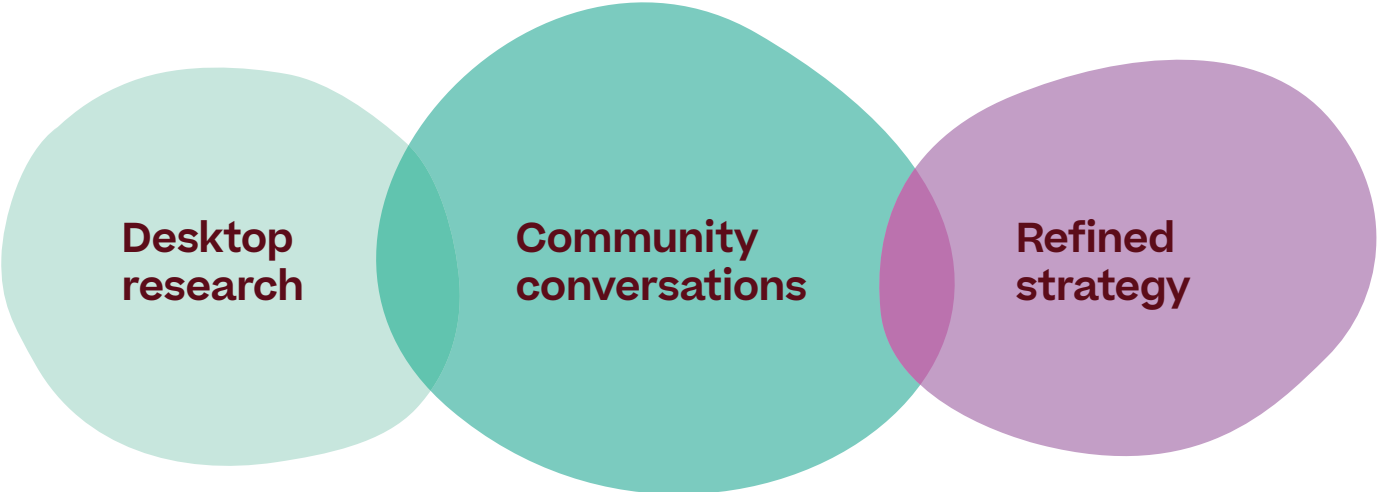
development
process

Strategy

A strategic working group consisting of representation from the theatre venues, education, Māori and disability sectors has overseen high-level engagement around the process, research and scope.



The Creative Waikato team have worked through a broad process of desktop research which led into targeted community consultation specific to this region.



To understand the performing arts sector ecosystem, 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.

The questions asked of people were focused on understanding thoughts and ideas on what a thriving performing arts sector looks like.

- ‘What are the challenges and opportunities for the performing arts sector?’
- ‘What is the communities’ experience of using current venues?’*
- ‘What opportunities are there to complement and support the Waikato Regional Theatre as a new part of the local ecosystem?’

*Includes theatres, rehearsal spaces, community halls and school spaces

What is this about?

To guide performing arts development in the Waikato region, with a view to providing a platform to strengthen the ecosystem of performing arts and its infrastructure.



Who is it for?

The Performing Arts Strategy should be relevant for the performing arts sector (organisations and venues), but can also be utilised by funders, community organisations, government and businesses as well as other key regional enablers and stakeholders.

Why does it matter?

Having a strategy that considers the bigger picture of the sector and provides a shared vision or focus for future development is an important way to move forward in a positive direction.

It can help us to collectively have a clarity of focus, but to also share responsibility towards enabling the change we want to see. We can each make small contributions to have larger-scale change.

Are there big picture trends that inform this work?

There has been an evolving of performing arts sectors internationally over the past 50-60 years.

With the presence of global pandemics, divisive politics and growing social movements, it is now more important than ever that the performing arts sector continues to evolve and connect with communities.

Arts researcher Steven A Wolff describes the key development as relevant, authentic celebrations of cultural diversity, leading the way in ensuring that the performing arts have a place in the cultural identity and expression of citizens and communities worldwide.*

These arts centres (our venues, spaces and places) are seen as having a strong alignment with community building and benefits; a shift from simply being a home for the performing arts to being a place of innovation and learning—core contributions to the value, richness and cultural wellbeing of our communities.



*Wolff, Steven A 'The Evolved Performing Arts Centre'
<https://www.ams-online.com/The-evolved-performing-arts-centre>

‘Modern arts centres are a major, positive force in the arts and cultural ecosystem and the economic vitality of many communities’*

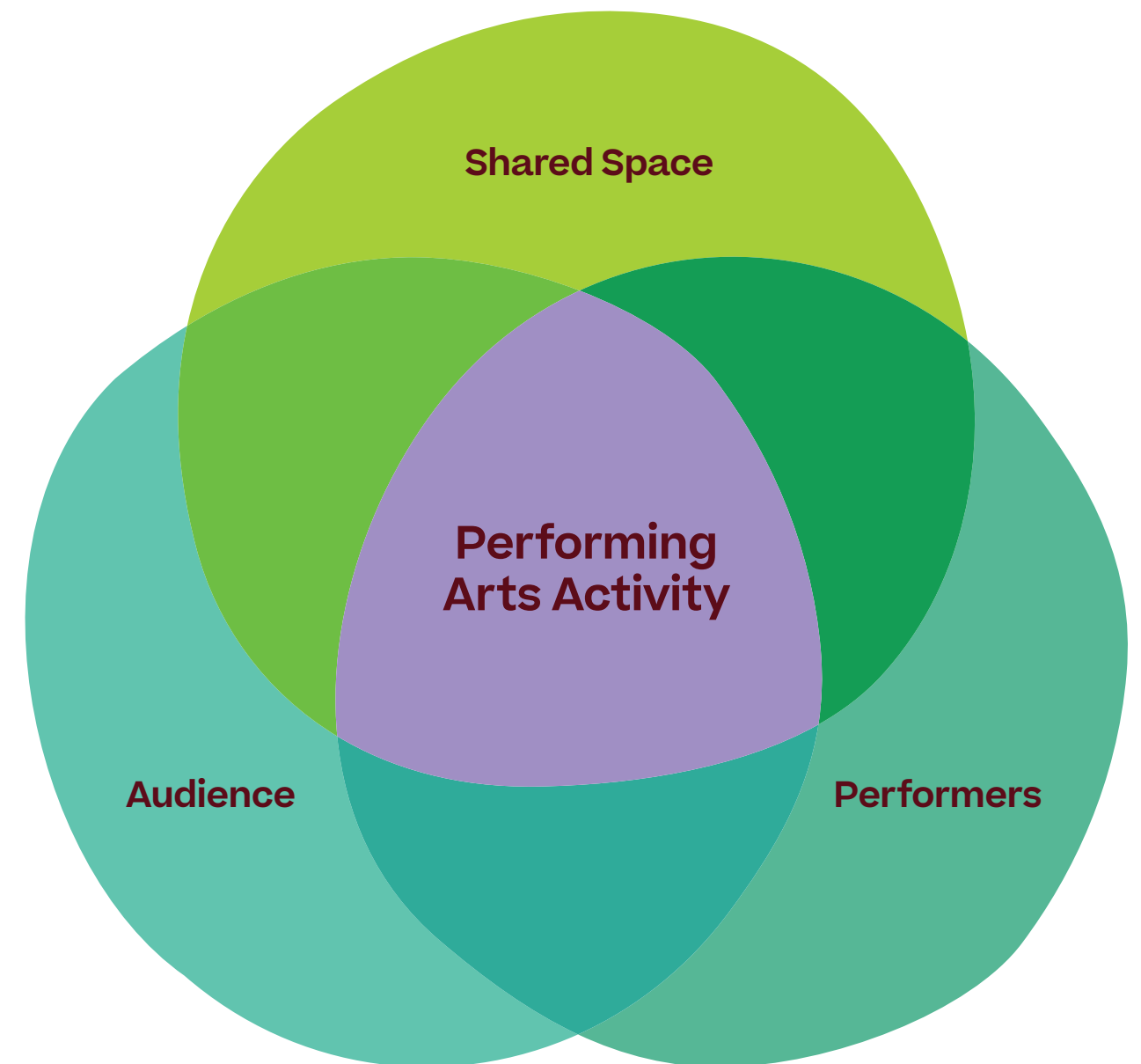
*Wolff, Steven A 'The Evolved Performing Arts Centre' <https://www.ams-online.com/the-evolved-performing-arts-centre>

How did we approach this work?

For Creative Waikato, it was important that this engagement and development was led by the Performing Arts Sector.

As the strategy is about the performing arts sector, it is vital that it involved the voices of those in the sector. It speaks to observations of both strengths and gaps seen by the people most active in enabling the types of activity that will embody this strategic framework.

As with all the work we do, we consider this mahi with a cross-regional viewpoint.



It is vital to understand collective impact requires collective vision and scope. But with that in mind, performing arts activity is also directly connected to place. It expresses what it means to be here and now, and how our stories relate

to the spaces where we live, play and create. We acknowledge that performing arts activity is very much about shared space, audiences and performers intertwined in space and time for shared positive impact.

Link to the Waikato Arts Navigator

The Waikato Arts Navigator (WAN) creates a shared framework, including a vision and strategy, for supporting and strengthening our arts and culture in the region. It guides planning and decision making.



In using WAN as our common strategy, we can all track in the same direction and cross-regional efforts will support, complement and strengthen one another.

Five Threads of the Waikato Arts Navigator

The ultimate objective of WAN is to empower key enablers, funders and community organisations to make decisions with the following outcomes in mind. This would lead to transformational systemic change for the Waikato and its people.

The opportunity for the performing arts sector to embed these threads within strategies, planning and programming would enable the sector to become a dynamic, responsive and self-sustaining sector into the future.

These threads represent key areas of focus that connect across our broader societal ecosystem.

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

Arts and cultural ecosystem

It is important to acknowledge the wider arts and cultural ecosystem, which the performing arts sector sits within.

It is an interconnected ecosystem of arts infrastructure, which provides clear pathways for artists and communities.

A collaborative space where the value of the artists in society can be better recognised and utilised. It is important for local government, industry and sector leaders to see artists as a more embedded component within the rest of society.

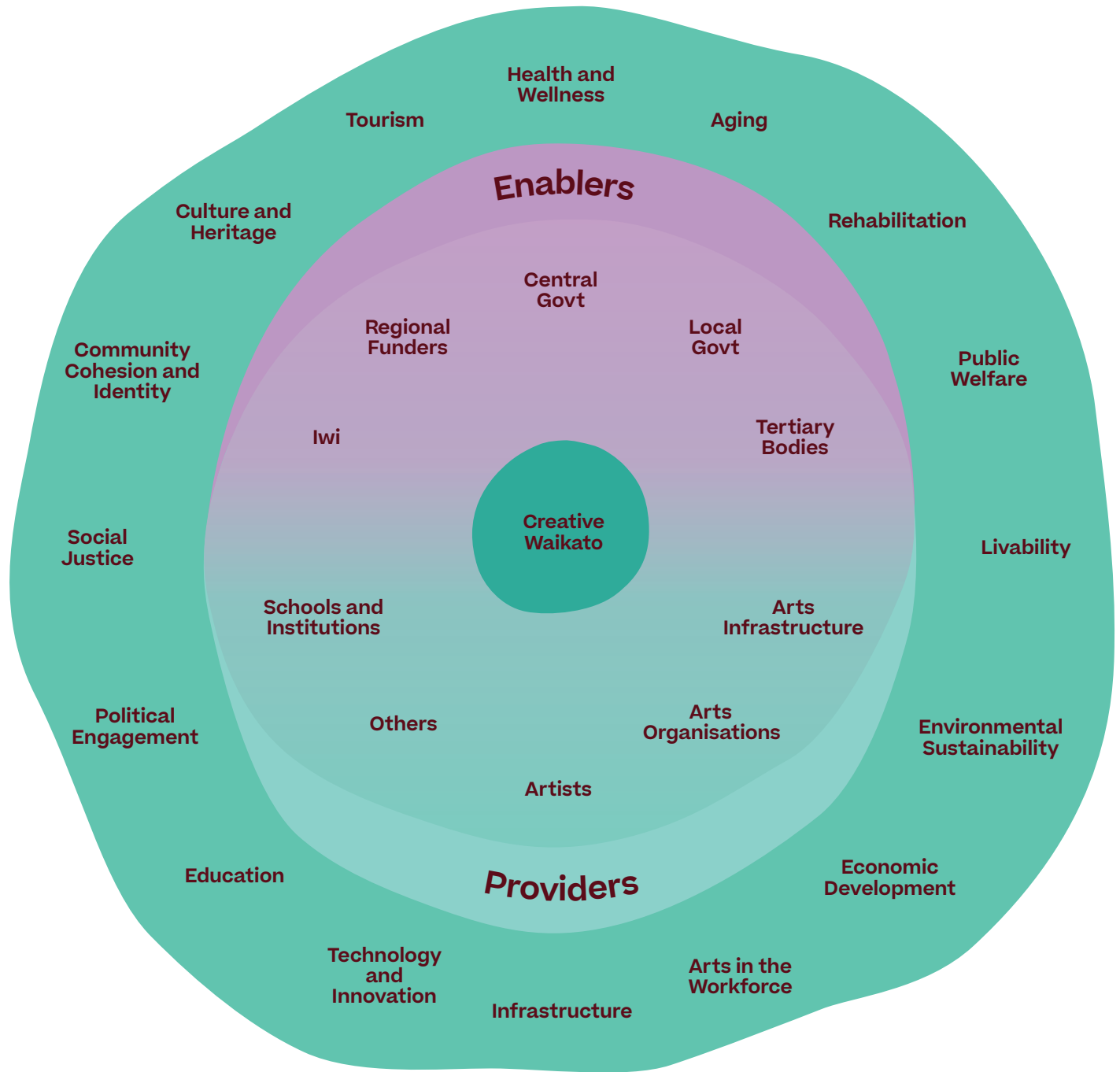
Health and Wellness
Wellbeing for individuals
Better care for each other
Increased quality of life
Aging
Physical and mental stimulation
Entertainment
Social interaction

Rehabilitation
Purpose
Self-care
Social interaction
Capability development
Public Welfare
Community pride
Mutual trust
Safer and healthier communities

Livability
Arts create vibrant cities
Environmental impact
Quality of life
Environmental Sustainability
Education and innovation
Advocating and driving awareness
Communication

Economic Development
Economic wellbeing
Support services and impact
Sustainable funding
Workforce development
Arts in the Workforce
Well-rounded workers who drive innovation
Creative thinkers
Solid communicators

Arts and cultural ecosystem within the broader society and community



Infrastructure
Advocacy, communication, design, breaking down barriers
Agriculture, food, transport, housing, planning and community development
Technology and Innovation
Symbiotic relationship for creation and development
Technology can be used to create and disseminate art

Education
Arts are part of a well-rounded education
Curiosity and exploration
Important at all levels of education
Political Engagement
Can encourage political engagement, voting, and activation

Social Justice
Civic dialogue to discuss issues and policies
Arts facilitate dialogue
Community Cohesion and Identity
Binds people together through shared experience
Creates common vision for the future
Arts bring people together

Culture and Heritage
Art activity
Diversity/access/ identity
History and tradition
Tourism
Economic impact
Empathy between communities
Arts for travel



Context

Te Ao Maaori

Kotahi te koohao o te ngira, e
kuhuna ai te miro maa, te miro pango,
te miro whero.

Through the eye of the needle
pass the white thread, the black thread,
and the red thread.

This is a comparatively modern whakatauākī/Tongikura that was quoted by Kingi Pootatau, the first Māori King. In the year 1858, a large gathering assembled at Ngaaruawaahia for the religious ceremony of proclaiming Pootatau as King. The rite was performed by Wiremu Tamihana Tarapipipi.

Present at the ceremony was the high chief of the Tuwharetoa Tribe, Te Heuheu, who during the course of his oration said:

‘Pootatau, today I anoint you kiingi for the Māori people. You and Queen Victoria are today united. Let the religion of Jesus be your mantle to protect you; and may the laws of the land be the mat on which to place your feet forever.’

To this, Pootatau replied:

‘There is but one eye of a needle, through which white, black and red cotton are threaded. Hereafter, hold fast to charity, uphold the laws and be firm in the Faith.’

This whakatauākī has implications for both the making of connections and collaboration that may ensue as we work towards supporting a common vision.

As we think about the broader ‘performing arts’ context of this strategic document, it is vital that we also acknowledge the nature and importance of the performing arts as being expressions of Te Ao Māori and woven throughout the context of being based in Aotearoa.

Expressions of performing arts can be found through waiata, kapa haka, taonga puuro, mooteatea, koorero, and the wider expressions of culture, stories, community and connection. This is an important component of Waikato performing arts, that extends through daily community and cultural practice into the realms of professional artists of all different forms.

Four generations of Performing Arts Centres

The Four Generations of Arts Centres model, developed by Steven Wolff, describes how modern performing arts centres have evolved over the past 50-60 years.*

1990s

The community's centre

Broader role in community—extending into education programs, providing better community access, bringing diverse communities together—building civic pride, cohesion, diversity.

Now

Creativity and Innovation

Facilitating a learning environment: new experiences, new knowledge created, enhanced cultural awareness, encouraging exploration, considering different viewpoints and dialogue. A resource for the arts, not just a means of delivering the arts. These centres are not limited by their physical boundaries. They add value, build capacity and create opportunity.

1970s

Arts centre as Place

Realised secondary effect on neighbourhoods' economies with benefits to other business like restaurants, retail, housing—making the area more attractive to live in and work in. An anchor for vibrancy and liveability.

1960s

Arts centre as Home

Showcase for the arts—a home for an arts organisation.

*Wolff, S. Rethinking Success: The Evolved Performing Arts Center, AMS Planning and Research, <http://www.ams-online.com/the-evolved-pac/>

The Performing Arts Economy

The informal economy behind every production is vast. When we look at a standard theatrical production, the actor you see on the stage is just the tip of the iceberg.

Hundreds of people contribute to those performances, and with a thriving ecosystem this should be contributing to their livelihood, as well as community wellbeing.

Often this work is volunteer work, and there is a community of people who work tirelessly to bring shows to life for the community. Perhaps a baseline calculation could be: 80 people × 250 hours per person × a standard base creative employment rate of \$25 per hour = \$500,000 contribution from the community into the cultural wellbeing of our community.*

*Creative NZ, Remuneration Policy for Artists and Arts Practitioners, 2022 https://creativenz.govt.nz/-/media/Project/Creative-NZ/CreativeNZ/Legacy-Page-Documents/20220209_remuneration_policy_for_artists_and_arts_practitioners.pdf

If we break down some typical show figures for a theatre production in Hamilton:

3 mth

Rehearsal period
(4 per week at minimum
3 hours per session)

100's

of hours set building,
costume sewing, prop
building

\$1000's

Spent on materials, lighting,
sound, technology

1 week

Prep in the theatre
(often 12-18 hour days)

10-20

People in the cast

4-10

People in the band

4-10

People in the creative
production team

30-60

Crew (backstage,
costume, set, lights,
sound etc.)

The graphic shows the scale of who is involved in this economy.

- SHOW**
Performers
Musicians
- PRODUCTION/
CREATIVE**
Director
Coaches/Teachers/
Tutors
Choreographer
Musical Director
Producer/Manager
Specialist/Advisor
Writers/Composers

- TECHNICAL/
CREATIVE**
Lighting Design
Sound Design
Set Design
Costume Design
Stage Management
Health & Safety
Crew (Venue
Technicians/External
Providers)
Props
Hair/Make up
Wardrobe

- VENUE**
Education
Marketing/Audience
Development
Front of house
Box Office
Management
Security
Maintenance
Cleaning
Catering/Bar Staff

- ASSOCIATED
SUPPORT**
Casting Directors
Ticket Agencies
Talent Agencies
Journalism
Photo & Video
Design & Print
Ad Agencies
Medical
Legal
Insurance
Hire Companies
Catering Services
Logistics
Rehersal Space
Tech Contractors

- WIDER
ECONOMY**
Retail Business
Travel
Clubs
Hotels
Bars & Pubs
Restaurants

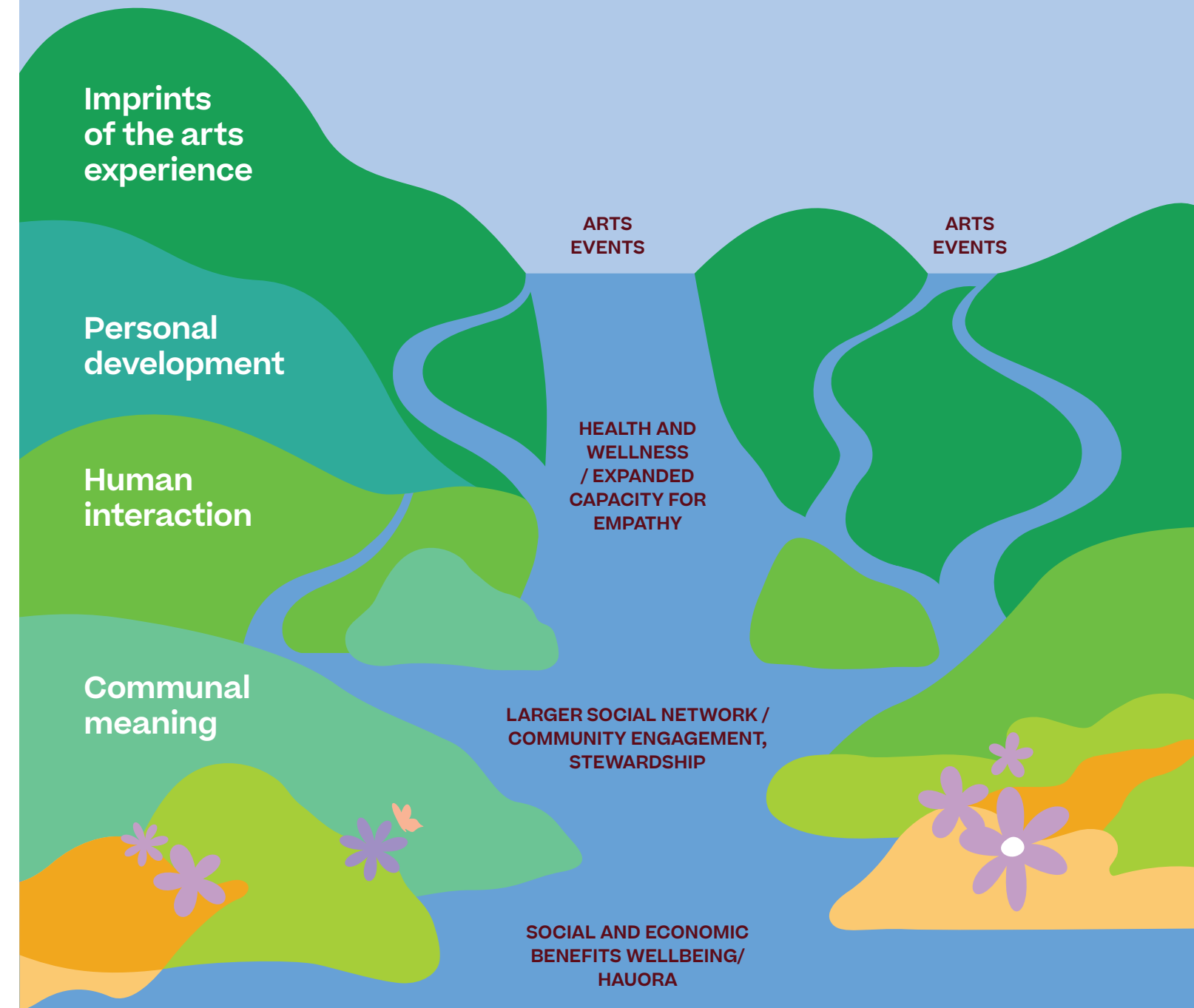
What are performing arts?

Performing arts are often time-based live arts experiences that tell stories through movement, sound and light. The performing arts encompass many things and have been fundamental and essential components of the human experience throughout time.

The performing arts are arts such as music, dance, drama and cultural forms which are typically performed for an audience. This is an embodied form of expression that can be delivered individually, but more often involves a collaborative process that brings creatives, technicians, and support crew together to create a unique experience for an audience.

Theatre, music, dance and other kinds of performances are present in all human cultures. Performances can be in purpose-built venues, such as theatres, on outdoor stages at festivals, in site-specific locations, such as gardens, tents and libraries, and also on the street.

An architecture of performing arts value



From the moment of engagement with any creative experience we begin a journey that will unfold in many different ways, and connect with our personal development, as well as our interpersonal interactions and our broader long-term community building.

This is a cycle. Our social and economic benefits flow back through into engagement, funding, support, volunteering, investment, advocacy and the continued development of the arts, culture and creativity into the future.

performing arts

The
vision
for

The vision

The performing arts in the Waikato has the potential in the next 30 years to build upon its rich and varied history to support sustainable growth in the sector, to engage new audiences, and to tell local stories and create opportunities for new practitioners to share their voice.



It can build upon the strength of what has been emerging throughout our interconnected community and find new pathways to flourish in the next era of performing arts activity.



The Waikato Performing
Arts ecosystem thrives
through inspiring
communities and
enabling diverse
creative activity.

Te Tiriti and Partnership

When aligning the kaupapa throughout the world of performing arts and beyond, it is important to consider the cultural, environmental, social and economic aspects in connection to Te Ao Māori to ensure that the relevant interests are being considered.

There are some useful links and resources provided by Te Arawhiti which include:

Guidelines for engagement with Māori

www.tearawhiti.govt.nz/assets/Tools-and-Resources/Guidelines-for-engagement-with-Maori.pdf

Building closer partnerships with Māori

www.tearawhiti.govt.nz/assets/Tools-and-Resources/Building-closer-partnerships-with-Maori-Principles.pdf

Additional resources

www.tearawhiti.govt.nz/assets/Tools-and-Resources/Whainga-Amorangi/TA013.04-MCR-capability-OCC.pdf

These resources highlight 6 principles

1

Build the partnership before focusing on the work

2

Plan together from the start

3

Value each party’s contribution and knowledge

4

Ensure outcomes are meaningful to all parties

5

Be open, be flexible and accept risk

6

Share decision making

These principles provide an important lens for ensuring that Te Ao Māori is woven through the range of activities taking place in our spaces and venues. With these in mind, we can grow sustainable relationships throughout the community where everyone can benefit and thrive together, while providing inclusive performance spaces that are accessible and welcoming to all parties.

From each organisation’s perspective, it is important to look into organisational capability components to ensure that supports cultural change. Although cultural change can be difficult to achieve, it is an important part of a thriving performing arts ecosystem, and will require consistent and sustained effort, with open and continual communication to move in the right direction, but the results will be hugely rewarding for all.

Principles

Creative sector-led

This is a kaupapa drawn from conversations with the sector. It speaks to observations of both strengths and gaps seen by the people most active in enabling the types of activity that will embody this strategic framework.

It seeks to acknowledge their mahi and support them with a framework for growth, support and activation.



Thinking regionally

Creatives don't work within geographic boundaries. We move between spaces, sectors, barriers and beyond to create opportunities and connections.



From this perspective it was necessary to consider this strategy with a cross-regional view point — as is the case for the Waikato Arts Navigator. It understands that collective impact requires collective vision and scope.

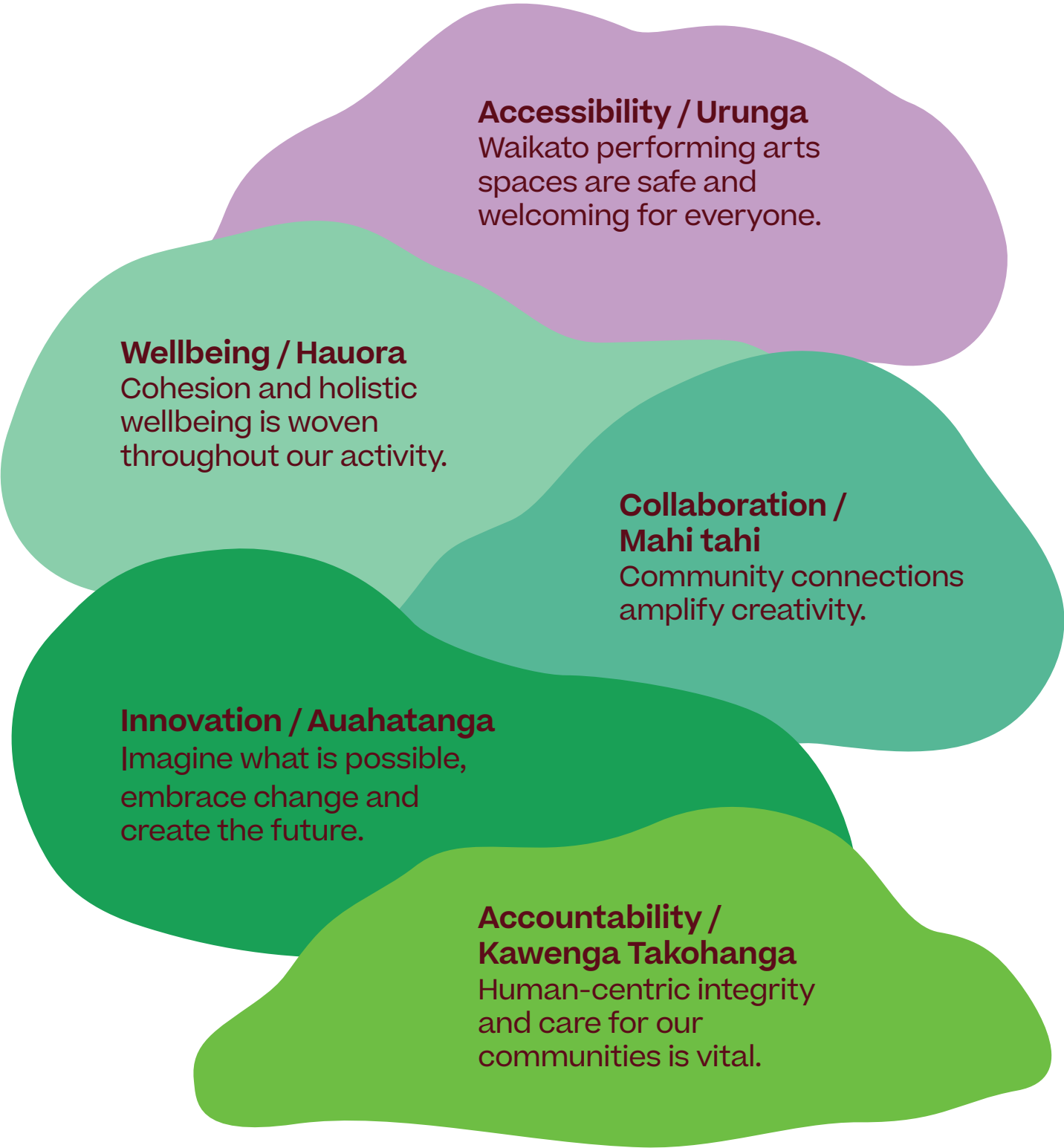
Acting Locally

This activity is also connected to place. It expresses what it means to be here and now and how our stories relate to the spaces where we live, play and create.

We acknowledge that performing arts activity is very much about shared space, audiences and performers intertwined in space and time for shared positive impact. This is local activation of universal possibilities.



Values



Long-term focus areas

Drawing from the insights shared by our diverse community, the pathway for supporting this vision in the next 30 years has emerged in four strands of focus.

Connection Tūhono

- Collaborative sharing of resource and activity
- Communities of practice
- Representation and inclusion

Community Hapori

- Empowering rangatahi
- Accessible experiences
- Education and development

Capital Pakihi

- Enhanced civic investment
- Diverse and active audiences
- Creative enablers

Creativity Auahatanga

- Innovative engagement
- Participatory pricing
- Programming and impact

Te Whare Tapa Whā

There is an alignment between the four focus areas and the Te Whare Tapa Whā model.* This was drawn from Te Manatū Hauora website.

Te Taha Hinengaro Mental

The capacity to communicate, to think and to feel mind and body are inseparable.

Thoughts, feelings and emotions are integral components of the body and soul.

This is about how we see ourselves in this universe, our interaction with that which is uniquely Māori and the perception that others have of us.

Representation and inclusion.

Taha Whānau Family

The capacity to belong, to care and to share where individuals are part of wider social systems.

Whānau provides us with the strength to be who we are. This is the link to our ancestors, our ties with the past, the present and the future.

Understanding the importance of whānau and how whānau (family) can contribute to illness and assist in curing illness is fundamental to understanding Māori health issues.

Taha Tinana Physical

The capacity for physical growth and development.

Good physical health is required for optimal development.

Our physical ‘being’ supports our essence and shelters us from the external environment. For Māori the physical dimension is just one aspect of health and wellbeing and cannot be separated from the aspect of mind, spirit and family.

Taha Wairua Spiritual

The capacity for faith and wider communication.

Health is related to unseen and unspoken energies.

The spiritual essence of a person is their life force. This determines us as individuals and as a collective, who and what we are, where we have come from and where we are going.

A traditional Māori analysis of physical manifestations of illness will focus on the wairua or spirit, to determine whether damage here could be a contributing factor.

*<https://www.health.govt.nz/our-work/populations/maori-health/maori-health-models/maori-health-models-te-whare-tapa-wha>

Connection Tūhono

To truly reflect a performing arts sector that is thriving, there must be connections and collaboration between the various artists, arts organisations, venues and other key enablers that can support it.



What does Connection look like?

- Sharing of resources, insights, content and support
- Pathways for practitioners between spaces and groups
- Draws upon community strength to build capability within each other

Current strengths

- Numerous cross-over points between groups and venues
- Strong volunteer activation
- Existing venue collaborations

Potential pitfalls

- Complexity of competitive funding
- Capacity for collaboration (requires allocation of time and resource)

Opportunities

- Stronger communities of practice with regular connection points
- Shared infrastructure for audience engagement
- Stronger engagement between education and the sector

Collaborative sharing
of resource and activity

Collective activation makes
better use of resources, funding
and capability.

Supporting the interconnection
of our spaces, groups, activities, and
planning can only have a positive impact
on the wealth of performing arts activities
in our communities.

Building on the cross-pollination
of different groups and genres, the
importance of working together means
that a thriving performing arts sector
can become healthy, self-sustaining and
resilient. The relative ease with how we can
do things is an advantage, and therefore,
there is strength in having a joined-up
approach to how venues promote each
other’s shows, and collaborate around
mutually beneficial goals and outcomes.

‘Whakataukī: Ēhara taku
toa i te toa takitahi,
engari he toa takitini:
Success is not the work
of an individual, but the
work of many’

‘We can do what we want
here, create the work we
want. We have less peer
pressure and can just get
on and do things – more
so than other places’

Shared promotional
infrastructure

Imagine an interconnected
network of promotion on digital screens
inside all the key venues in an area. These
eco-friendly screens show posters from
performing arts activity across the whole
network of venues. Audiences can watch
a show, find out what is on in other spaces,
and make more plans for further creative
activity on following nights.

Space brokerage

A lack of venue and rehearsal
space provides an opportunity to under-
stand what we currently have available so
that the community knows what’s available
and how to access this information. Spaces
that can be used for multi-purposes will be
an advantage for those seeking versatility
of spaces according to different needs,
particularly youth, ethnic groups and wider
community groups. This includes thinking
about outdoor spaces and interesting
spaces and how performing arts can
activate these.



Ongoing connection to foster community of practice

A community of practice is a group of people who share a common interest and come together to fulfil both individual and group goals.

This can occur at individual and organisational levels, and often focus on sharing best practices and creating new knowledge to advance activity in that area of focus. Regular and proactive interaction is a key drive of this.

‘If we can’t align, grow and change, we’ll end up without audiences’

Activities to try

- Regular networking meetings for different groups (Venue managers, Musical theatre organisations, Gig promoters, Cultural groups, etc)
- Sharing content and programming to support mutual benefit and audience growth
- Training opportunities to collectively upskill the community

Representation and inclusion

The performing arts sector should truly reflect our community, that means inclusive of Māori, LGBTQI folks, ethnic and migrant groups, and people with access issues.

How we include these communities is essential to not only their participation but also in how we connect with these audiences. This could include having passionate, educated front of house staff, diverse narratives and languages and more characters in shows that reflect our communities.

‘Think about the richness of what people with disabilities can bring’

‘Imagine if roles were won on skills and talent as opposed to biology’

‘We need more bare-boned shows, for the joy, not just the high-end stuff’

Activities to try

- Programme diverse content that tells stories of diverse communities
- Undertake awareness training for staff around inclusive practice
- Support initiatives that address barriers for access

Community Hapori

Building connections with our communities is essential for the performing arts sector to thrive and evolve.

If we desire to have a sector that truly reflects who we are, we must support and enable participation in the creative process and tell our own stories.

This means that our connections with the community are driven by an authentic commitment to audience development—one that enables audiences to feel a meaningful connection to the spaces, activities and opportunities that are presented.



What does Community look like?

- Commitment to meaningful audience development
- Pathways for rangatahi
- Accessible experiences

Current strengths

- Increasing educational opportunities—both formal and community-based
- Strong localised community connections for soft infrastructure

Potential pitfalls

- Sustainable career opportunities
- Support for accessible content
- Challenges for communication with audiences

Opportunities

- Build upon creative development programmes to tell local stories
- Connect with new audiences to support sector sustainability
- Diversify activity to support creative careers

Youth/Rangatahi
as a focus

Having an authentic two-way conversation with audiences, listening to what they want, their arts experiences, their attendance obstacles and creating access, trust and loyalty is at the heart of a fourth-generation approach to audience development.*

Focusing on children and youth is essential in embedding an awareness and passion for performing arts, that not only helps foster a love of performing arts but also helps to build future sustainable careers. This not only means that children are involved in the performing arts for the specific purpose of putting on a show, but for the joy of being involved.

Kapa haka provides opportunities for tamariki to be involved in performing from a young age. The wider whānau network is one of support, pride and encouragement.

Activities to try

- Include youth-focussed activities and programming
- Have trial days or opportunities to ask questions and explore for youth

*Creative Waikato 'audience development' definition

Accessible
experiences

Accessibility is a vital part of a thriving performing arts ecosystem. People need to be able to access these opportunities.

They need to see their stories on stage, to have the potential to take part in creative activities, and to have a sector that proactively works to remove any potential barriers for engagement with communities. This is true of flax roots activity, through to professional work.

The pandemic experience has increased the need for performing arts experiences that serve wellbeing, but at the same time it has negatively impacted equity gaps across society. In order for the ecosystem to thrive, we need to provide space for everyone to have full and fair access to opportunities for these experiences. Opportunities to be a part of the ecosystem and explore how performing arts activities can contribute to the betterment of their life, their family and their future.**

‘Let’s get people in [theatre venues] to see the craft working, people who can’t afford tickets or want to be exposed to how theatre is made’

Activities to try

- Encourage different communities to make use of performing arts spaces
- Try “bring someone new to the theatre” ticket deals

**For more information see the Huber Social 'Wellbeing and Arts, Culture and Creativity in the Waikato' report: https://creativewaikato.co.nz/site/uploads/HS_Creative-Waikato_Wellbeing-and-Arts-Culture-and-Creativity-in-the-Waikato_FINAL.pdf

Education and development

As the ‘theatre economy’ diagram suggests, the show is just the tip of the iceberg.

There is a vast industry that supports the actual production of a show. From costume designers, prop makers, technicians, front of house, directors, choreographers—the opportunities for education and development for both youth/rangatahi and beyond are numerous.

It is vital that we are providing pathways that have the potential to be a springboard into creative careers. We have a strong tertiary sector which supports the performing arts. It is essential that we foster talent and help elevate artists’ work to the next level, so that they can share this work nationally and internationally.

The opportunity for the Waikato Regional Theatre to build connections with the current theatres and venues that exist as well as the performing arts sector and wider communities will be in alignment with a centre that is built on creativity and innovation.

‘My high school had been given tickets to a show at Founders when I was a teenager, it was the first thing I ever saw. I loved it, I couldn’t believe what I was seeing. We were poor, my family didn’t even go to the movies because it was too expensive...I thought the theatre was for other people, not for people like me...I can’t acknowledge this experience enough’

‘You need the small ones to support the big ones. You need the play areas before you get to the serious areas, you need to go on the swing before you go on the rollercoaster’

Also ensuring that when larger touring groups come to the Waikato Regional Theatre, there is a commitment to providing local people opportunities to learn tools, skills and knowledge that will go back into the community and economy.



Activities to try

- Embedded education programmes with arts organisations
- Community focussed-workshops as a part of programming and activity—intertwine capability building with the staging of arts experiences.
- Support initiatives like ‘The Boil Up’ and ‘The New Works Incubator’ as a development programme for creative practitioners.

Capital Pakihi

Investing in the performing arts is an investment in social cohesion, sense of space and place, and a vibrancy of culture in our region.

The shared experiences contained within the various expressions of the performing arts are a vital antidote to loneliness and isolation, whilst also inspiring us to look both inward and outward to find our connections and understand our stories. But for these things to thrive, they need investment. This is an essential part of the public good of modern society. The return on this investment is in civic pride, social cohesion, and in inspiration, celebration and wellbeing.



What does Capital look like?

- Sustainable strategic investment
- More audiences attending more activities
- Investment in people as a core resource

Current strengths

- Community-activated models of activity
- Growing engagement with audiences

Potential pitfalls

- Lack of meaningful long-term investment
- Ability to maintain spaces over time
- Pathways for sustainable careers

Opportunities

- Collaborative strength-based high-trust funding models
- National advocacy with local activation
- Increased visibility as WRT is constructed

Enhanced Civic Investment

The performing arts sector has been subject to systemic underinvestment over many years, and like the broader arts sector, this is having long-term impact.

Artists, arts groups and venues receive modest amounts of investment which is disproportionate to the value and effort that is provided. The impact of the pandemic and competition for the leisure dollar makes it an increasingly difficult sector to become self-sustaining.

The need to identify funding pathways that span local/central government/philanthropic and sponsorship is essential for the sustainability of the sector long-term. There must be continued work to demonstrate the value of arts, culture and creativity by advocacy groups, alongside the collaborative efforts of the sector to enable longevity.

‘Good infrastructure = practice spaces, appropriate venues and engaged audiences’

‘[Technicians are the] structure behind the chaos, backbone, enablers of making things happen’

Activities to try

- Ongoing advocacy to support sustainable investment (local and national)
- Exploring corporate sponsorship opportunities

Diverse and active audiences

It is important that our spaces and places have a diverse array of programming targets to connect with activity for diverse audiences.

This means mixing professional and participatory, commercial and community, experienced and emerging, and celebrating the value and importance of all ends of those spectra. When we look at how our spaces work, we want to see that balance activated from the smallest spaces all the way through to the new Waikato Regional Theatre. It is essential to find that balance between commercial and community outcomes to enable an engaging and flourishing space. This will be a challenge, but also an opportunity. Fourth generation performing arts centres, are centres of creativity and innovation; as well as creating new knowledge and experiences and facilitating different viewpoints and dialogue, they are also a significant fixture in the economic landscape in which they serve.

Reaching beyond its physical boundaries, all our performing arts venues should work to form partnerships with their neighbouring businesses, community groups and the broader retail sector to enable a regular stream of activity on a consistent basis. Look at the potential in cross-sector and beyond-sector activation and collaboration – both for support and for new audiences. This type of activity can add value, build capacity and create opportunity.

‘It will raise the profile of the performing arts in the city, give us something to point and aspire to’

‘To have 800 people come out onto the streets after a show, they’ll be mixing of people and it will make the town feel better’.

Activities to try

- Community connection days with local businesses
- Utilising unusual times of day or spaces to encourage different engagement

Creative enablers

There is a genuine desire from the performing arts sector and wider communities to facilitate involvement in the performing arts, as well as the Waikato Regional Theatre, from a broad cross section of the community.

This means more people attending more things, sharing resources and larger-scale works and facilitating pathways to grow audiences and foster talent.

The role our arts organisations, groups, clubs, societies and collectives can play in activating communities, inspiring participation, growing audiences, and generally inspiring creative practice is a vital and important part of shifting societal awareness and cultural value. Ensuring our creative enablers can have thriving professional careers in the performing arts in the Waikato, means there is increased capacity for connecting with audiences and beyond. This will require a multidisciplinary approach.

The Waikato Regional Theatre is —
‘Missing piece of the puzzle’
‘Jewel in the crown’
‘A game changer’

Activities to try

- Exploring how our performing arts organisations can connect with new audiences
- Share stories that show behind the curtain of the performing arts to celebrate the strength of the community.

If you find something that resonates with you, you feel it in your body.

Creativity Auahatanga

Change is constant and necessary. New ways of thinking, acting, engaging and connecting. We are moving into an age of experience—the activities and spaces for memory making become more vital as we move into a climate aware society.

We know that the impact of the pandemic was huge. It limited lots of performing arts activities, and changed how people engaged. However, it also provided an opportunity to think about how we can do things differently.

The people we spoke to wanted to participate in and connect more with the sector, as they saw the value for themselves and their communities. This is a huge opportunity for new methods for activation and activity.



What does Creativity look like?

- Artist-led and experience-based
- Participatory and connected
- Social and human-centric, not just tech-based

Current strengths

- Adaptability and learned resilience
- Building from pandemic experience

Potential pitfalls

- Short-term tests
- Confidence in potential failure

Opportunities

- Participatory pricing models
- Strategic cross-ecosystem programming
- Collaborative investment

Innovative engagement

However, finding affordable venues and gaining access to these venues is challenging.

Also the type of venues and provision for different types of needs was varied. Having spaces for young people to give things a go, provision for kai at indigenous events and spaces for people who have access and neurodiverse needs is important. If we think about these as opportunities for inclusion and a diversity of communities experiencing the performing arts, then that is beneficial for everyone.

An estimated 498k (13%) of New Zealanders have the lived experience of disability which limits accessibility to arts, culture and creativity. When looking at barriers to engagement, there are a larger proportion of people who have at least ‘some difficulty’ (43% or an estimated 1.7mil people)*. It is important to be mindful of those accessibility needs in better serving our communities.

‘The first obstacle can often be an inaccessible website’

Activities to try

- Review your spaces and engagement and explore what can help to make improvements to connect with new people
- Encourage new stories to be told.

Participatory pricing

New models for theatre pricing and ticketing are being explored both nationally and internationally.

These models include ‘pay-what-you-can’, bring a friend who hasn’t been, or group concession. It is important to explore new ways to engage with audiences through these mechanisms to increase the accessibility of local performing arts experiences. This means a commitment to make specific efforts to distribute the tickets to those who think theatre is not for them, or are not hooked into the networks on which the offer is being marketed... otherwise these programmes might end up giving away tickets to regular theatregoers who would have been perfectly happy and able to contribute.

Activities to try

- Trial different pricing structures with different audiences
- Buy one gift one
- Dinner and show.

*Audience Atlas 2020, Creative New Zealand

Programming and impact

There is great potential to strategically think about how spaces are used, how we programme activity, how we understand the impact of performing arts activities in our communities and how we use those stories to inspire more engagement and more funding and support.

The performing arts are about stories. Data and insights are about stories. The opportunity is to tell this range of stories as effectively as possible to inspire more people to try new things.

The goal with this innovation is to create a more inclusive, diverse and equitable community.

Activities to try

- Explore the concept of seasons or themes in programming
- Collaborative programming between venues
- Alignment to other local activity.

Humans are storytellers.
We understand ourselves & our world through the stories we tell.

Performing arts ecosystem

The performing arts ecosystem is made up of facilities/venues (hard infrastructure) and artists/creatives/groups/technicians (soft infrastructure) each serving a purpose to facilitate pathways for the development of artistic outputs.

Our artists and groups are vital for the performing arts to thrive. This ecosystem only works with people. But we also need spaces and systems to support the people.

We see this ecosystem as a forest of infrastructure (ngahere) with connection to the performing birds (manu) and beyond. An ecosystem that supports the many, varied songs of birds as our creatives and community. The branches are interconnected and interwoven—

pathways for our venues, audiences, creatives. In order for the forest to flourish we need sustainable funding and wider community engagement, the sunlight, water and nutrients that help the forest to flourish.

Our ecosystem of venues, organisations, supporters and enablers must develop and collaborate to support pathways for sustainable growth and to champion the sharing of local stories with audiences in the Waikato and beyond.



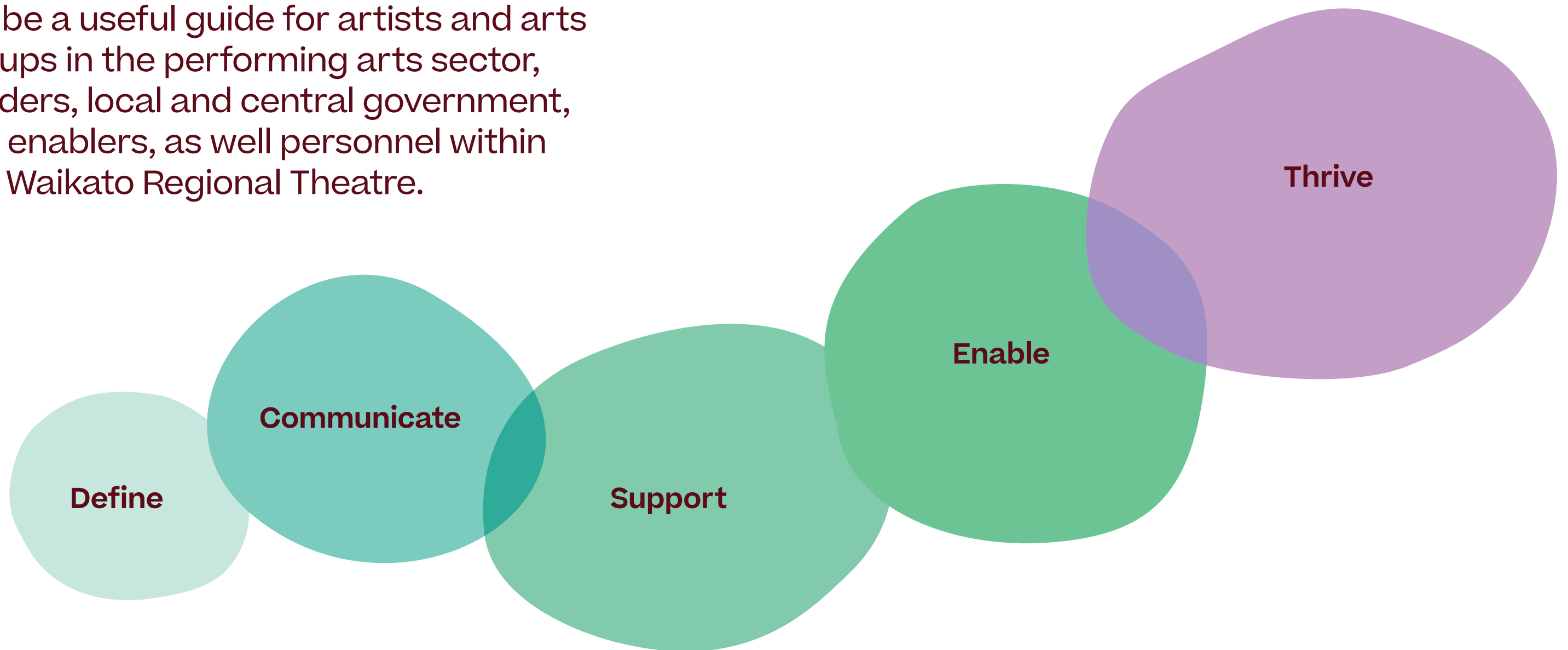
Trees and plants
spaces and places
Birds and creatures
creatives/artists/
groups/technicians
Flowers and leaves
audiences
Sunlight, water, nutrients
funders and enablers



Where
to

from
here

It is envisaged that this strategy will be a useful guide for artists and arts groups in the performing arts sector, funders, local and central government, key enablers, as well personnel within the Waikato Regional Theatre.



Creative Waikato is happy to help further support and advocate for the performing arts sector as well as the arts and culture sector as a whole to demonstrate the value and benefits that these sectors can provide for everyone.

If you'd like assistance aligning your thinking with the Performing Arts Strategy focus areas, create an Action Plan linking the WAN threads and outcomes, or just chat.

Please contact us
hello@creativewaikato.co.nz

Who we talked with

We want to thank everyone who gave their time, insights and vision to the creation of this strategy. Our community plays an important part in the local performing arts ecosystem and it is with their insights and mahi that everything is possible.

Strategic working group

Deborah Nudds, Meteor Theatre
Jason Wade, Clarence Street Theatre
Jenni Murphy-Scanlon, Riverlea Theatre
Laura Haughey, University of Waikato/Equal Voices Arts
Waimihi Hotere, Tainui Waka Tourism Inc
David Sidwell, Wintec
Mark Servian, Momentum
Adrienne Clothier, Creative Waikato
Kereama Clarke, Creative Waikato
Jeremy Mayall, Creative Waikato

Community

DANCE
Collette Arnold Dance, Collette Arnold
Moving Parts, Mike Sorensen
Dance Effects, Louise Ten Hove
Waikato Contemporary Dance Projects Trust, Dr Karen Barbour

MUSIC
Hamilton Community Centre of Music, Ann Shaffer
Live Music Trust, Lauren Kerr-Bell
Orchestras Central Trust, Catherine Gibson
Waikato Rocks Trust, Logan Nathan
Wai Taiko, Mike Vallabh

THEATRE
Bold Theatre, Charlotte Chuen
Carving in Ice, Gaye Poole
Cove Theatre, Cian Parker
David Sidwell, (also Education)
Equal Voices Arts, Laura Haughey
Free Lunch Theatre Company, Sandra Jensen
Hamilton Musical Theatre, Karen Langley
Hamilton Operatic Society, Phillipa Chesham/Nicole Hardy
Onewhero Society of Performing Arts, Sylvia Devlin
Performing Arts Community Trust, Jenni Murphy-Scanlon
Playbox Riverlea, Jason Wing
Moving Parts, Michael Sorenson
Stories and More, Cecilia Mooney

COMMUNITY
Dementia Waikato, Christine Martin
Momentum Waikato, Mark Servian
Toi Toi Hawkes Bay Arts and Events Centre, Megan Peacock-Coyle
Rainbow Hub, Slay

VENUES/FESTIVALS
Clarence Street, Jason Wade
Hamilton Gardens Arts Festival, Geoff Turkington
Gallagher of Performing Arts, Dana Buchanan
H3 Claudelands, Sean Murray
Neverproject, Nick Walsh (also HGAF and musician)
Putāruru Plaza, Ashleigh McCormack
Riverlea Theatre, David Waine
The Fringe Festival, Alec Forbes
The Meteor, Deborah Nudds/Adrienne Clothier
The Place, Alexis Holmes

CULTURAL
Pasifika By Nature, Mareta Matenga
Paraone Glyone, Codirector Aungarea
Melaina Huaki, Performer/Kapa Haka
TAHI TA'I TASI, Benny Marama
Tainui Waka Cultural Trust, Craig Muntz/Paraone Gloyne
Tai Huata, Independent Playwright/Kapa Haka
Tony Walker, Principal/Kapa Haka
Waikato Arab Social Club, Mayssaa Sheik AL Ard
Waikato Punjabi Social Club, Rupinder Virk

KIRIKIRIROA COMMUNITY HOUSES
Good News Community Centre – Te Rongopai Community Trust, Susanne Rowse
Pukete Neighbourhood House, Scott Tiffany
‘Te Whare Kokonga’ Melville Community House, Rouruina Toa
‘Te Whare O Te Ata’ Fairfield Community House, Ofa Pouono

‘Waimarie’ Hamilton East Community House’, Jane Landman
Western Community Centre, Neil Tolan

TECHNICAL
ACLX, Aaron Chesham
H3, Michael Gilling/Paul Johns/Shule Thomas
Homegrown Events, Michael Lamusse
Independent, Jacob Tait
Independent, Lora Thompson
Independent, Bernd Newman
NJL Productions Limited, Aaron Hobman
Scott Sound and Lighting, Scott Williams
University of Waikato, Oliver Stewart

YOUTH
Fairfield College, Jamie Ferguson
Seed Waikato, Amy-Leigh Hopa/Hayley James
Star Jam, Troy Gaudencio
Waikato Arab Social Club, Rana M. Arif
Youthable, Kim Dyball
Zeal, Tony O’Rourke

Time spent in the performing arts gives people skills they often don't know they have.

Communication, teamwork, creativity, and more. These things are vital.

