

Briefing to Councillors

2026



**Creative
Waikato
Toi Waikato**

Arts, Culture,
Creativity
and Ngaa Toi
Maaori support
a thriving
Waikato region.

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Arts, culture, creativity and ngaa toi Maaori helps to build resilient and diverse communities and improve our quality of life.

Great art and culture inspires learning, boosts our economy, enhances wellbeing, builds regional and national reputation, and more. The role of arts, culture, creativity and ngaa toi Maaori has powerful potential in enabling councils with tools that enable them to think differently and provide unique solutions to complex issues.

Arts, culture and creativity and ngaa toi Maaori can also be used as ideal problem-solving tools to help us with major and ongoing challenges, aiding recovery and building resilience.

Arts and culture do not sit in isolation, and are woven through all facets of thriving societies. Collaborating with, and taking the leadership of Maaori is key to creating thriving communities. The embedding of arts, culture and creativity in all elements of government influence will add value and increase opportunity.

When arts and creativity is strong and visible, communities are strong and visible.

Central Government's Creative and Cultural Strategy – 2025-2030 'Amplify', seeks to increase the number of Kiwis actively engaging with arts, culture and heritage as well as create more jobs, driving economic growth.¹

It is important for government, industry and sector leaders to see artists as a more embedded component within the rest of society. This encourages the creation of a collaborative space where the value of artists in society can be better recognised and utilised. A diverse but interconnected ecosystem of arts infrastructure (both hard and soft) would provide clear pathways for artists and community members at any stage of the journey.

¹ 'Amplify' A Creative and Cultural Strategy for New Zealand – 2025-2030' pg 4, https://www.mch.govt.nz/sites/default/files/2025-09/Amplify-A_Creative_and_Cultural_Strategy_for_New_Zealand_2025-2030.pdf

The local context

It is hard to ignore societal, regional and local contexts when considering the role and impact of the decisions and investments made by local governments.

While this document is cognisant of the current financial situation and social environment, the aim is to present a range of possibilities that may extend current thinking, and explore cross department/sector/locale opportunities for collaborative outcomes.

Creative Waikato's intention is to support local councils to embrace imaginative and innovative possibilities for alternative ways of working that can lead to better outcomes, through positive community engagement and alongside sensible investment that considers the impact of our actions on future generations.

Importance of local government

The rate of change over the past few decades with shifting demographics, urbanisation and climate change has and will have a significant impact on the landscape of local government.

A well-functioning and effective local government contributes significantly to the overall economic and social outcomes of New Zealanders.²

There is an increasing need for councils (both governance and staff)

to engage with communities and encourage community participation in decision-making, and to consider the needs of people currently living in communities and those who will live there in the future.

² 'Briefing to the Incoming Minister of Local Government' January 2025 [https://www.dia.govt.nz/diawebsite.nsf/Files/Briefing-to-Incoming-Minister-January-2025/\\$file/Briefing-to-the-Incoming-Minister-of-Local-Government-Jan-2025.pdf](https://www.dia.govt.nz/diawebsite.nsf/Files/Briefing-to-Incoming-Minister-January-2025/$file/Briefing-to-the-Incoming-Minister-of-Local-Government-Jan-2025.pdf) p, 23

Understanding the creative ecosystem

To achieve the broadest possible impact, it is beneficial to view the contribution of arts, culture and creativity as part of a system across all facets of local government activity.

This system-based approach acknowledges cross-sector opportunities to enable effective outcomes and deliver better public services. This ecosystem approach is fundamental to our regional arts strategy.³

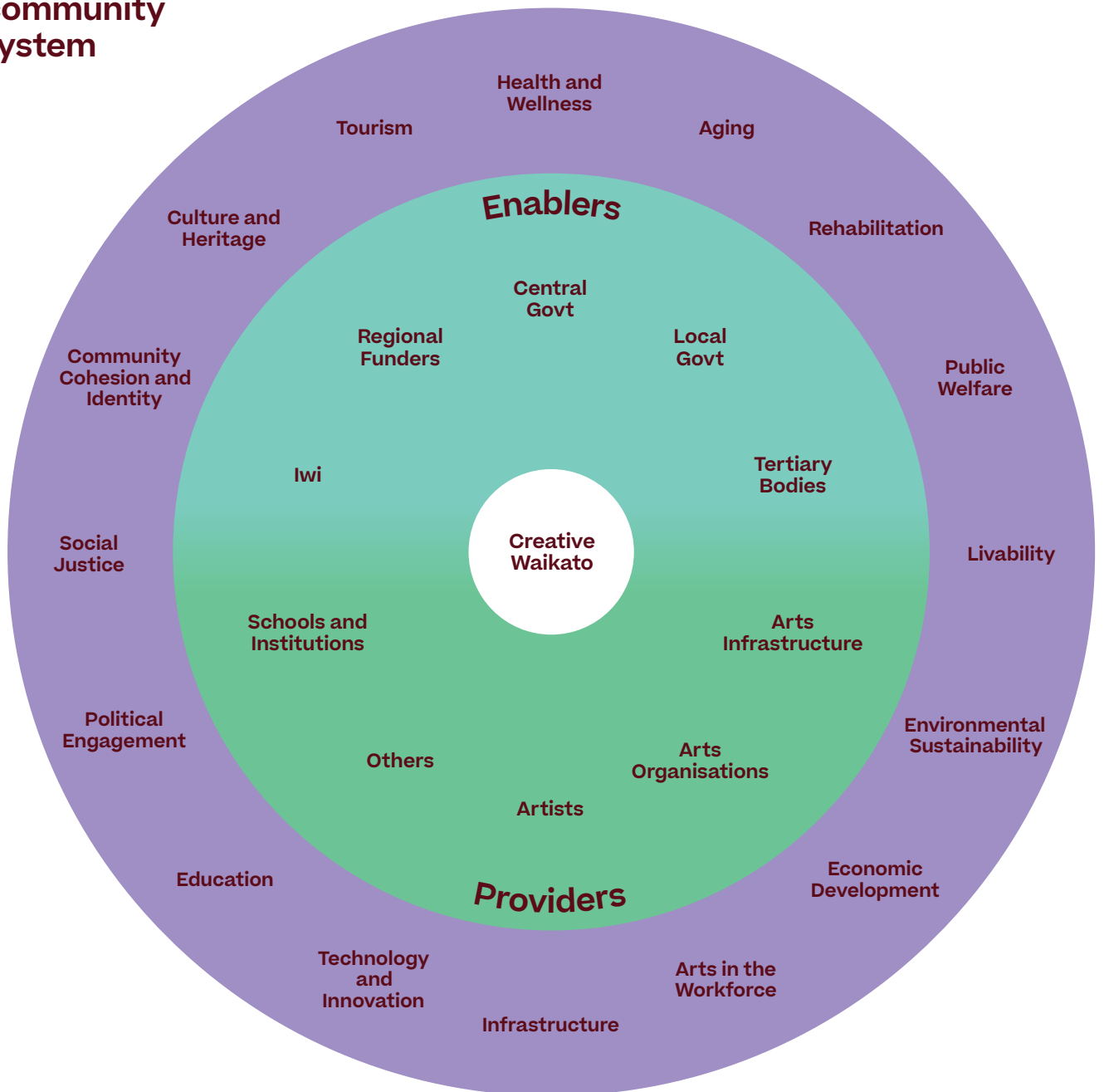
We present this briefing by examining a range of discrete but interconnected elements which can be combined to create more significant impacts than the individual parts alone. We believe this approach, in partnership

with sector-informed and localised delivery, can enable greater outcomes and efficiencies, to better enable robust change in local communities.

Here we present a systems map that highlights opportunities for positive local government influence when working with local and regional partners. This provides a high-level scope for change, with an indication of intersections, and connections into other government systems and structures.

³ <https://creativewaikato.co.nz/advocacy/strategy-space>

Arts as part of our community ecosystem

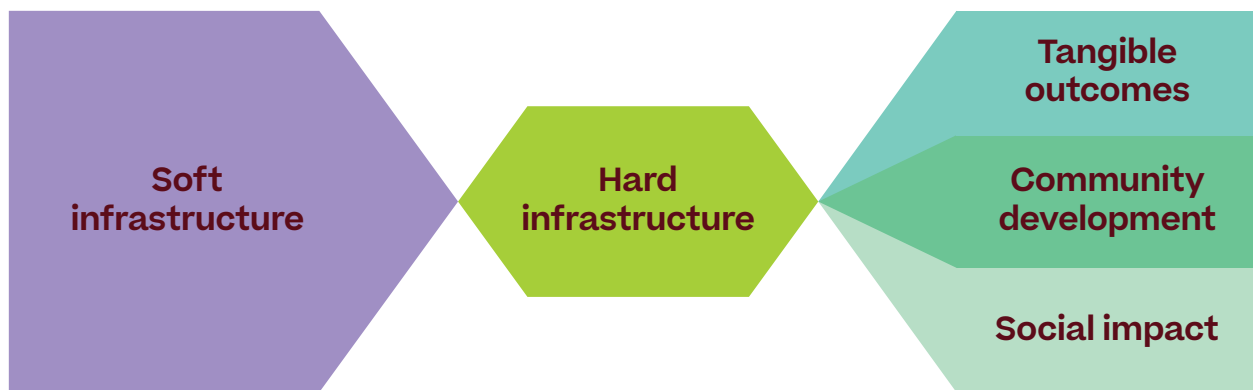


Health and Wellness Wellbeing for individuals Better care for each other Increased quality of life	Livability Arts create vibrant cities Environmental impact Quality of life	Infrastructure Advocacy, communication, design, breaking down barriers Agriculture, food, transport, housing, planning and community development	Social Justice Civic dialogue to discuss issues and policies Arts facilitate dialogue
Aging Physical and mental stimulation Entertainment Social interaction	Environmental Sustainability Education and innovation Advocating and driving awareness Communication	Technology and Innovation Symbiotic relationships for creation and development Technology can be used to create and disseminate art	Community Cohesion and Identity Binds people together through shared experience Creates common vision for the future Arts bring people together
Rehabilitation Sense of purpose Self-care Social interaction Capability development	Economic Development Economic wellbeing Support services and impact Sustainable funding Workforce development	Education Arts are part of a well-rounded education Curiosity and exploration Important at all levels of education	Culture and Heritage Art activity Diversity/access/identity History and tradition
Public Welfare Community pride Mutual trust Safer and healthier communities	Arts in the Workforce Well-rounded workers who drive innovation Creative thinkers Effective communicators	Political Engagement Can encourage political engagement, voting, and activation	Tourism Economic impact Empathy between communities Arts for travel

Arts, culture and creativity is an essential contributor to public infrastructure. It is a core component of vibrant, growing communities, and is a public good. It is an enabler and indicator of a thriving society.

Arts, culture and creativity is best understood not as discrete or siloed activity, but as something which is essential and intrinsic to all aspects of public life.

A cross-sector approach will be of best benefit for achieving the goals of this government and the people it serves.



Soft infrastructure	Hard infrastructure	Tangible outcomes
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Artists/Creatives • Volunteer groups • Creative career support • Production • Capability building for creative organisations • Sponsorship • In-kind contributions • Bylaws and policies • Investment • Business partnerships • Support for funding applications • Event permit applications • Regulations 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Community spaces • Venues • Galleries • Theatres • Workshops • Creative spaces • Community hubs • Rehearsal rooms • Marae • Fale • Halls 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Presentations • Events • Exhibitions • Shows • Performances • Festivals
		<p>Community development</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increased neighbourhood activation • Connection to CBD • Placemaking in civic spaces
		<p>Social impact</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increased liveability • Social cohesion • Thriving communities • Community wellbeing • Economic development

Broad areas of connection to council departments

Liveability	10
Community Cohesion and Identity	12
Culture and Heritage	14
Health and Wellbeing	16
Economic Development	18
Tourism	20
Technology and Innovation	22
Environmental Sustainability	24

The following sections explore some high-level themes that can be implemented throughout the indicated system areas included in the ecosystem map. These elements are presented with a brief discussion

of the key opportunities for positive impact and innovative change. These are matched with local government departments and example initiatives that could be supported through localised investment and activation.

Liveability

Liveability is an important concern in planning for population growth and housing intensification. It is key that our towns and cities contain accessible spaces where communities can connect, and that public spaces are welcoming to ensure that they are fully utilised.

Council is an anchor institution, a systems networker, and a place-maker.⁴

‘Placemaking’ is a powerful governmental tool for engaging communities in the planning, design and management of their shared public assets.

Placemaking shows people just how powerful their collective vision can be. It helps them to re-imagine everyday spaces, and to see anew the potential of parks, city centres, neighbourhoods, streets, markets and public buildings.⁵ Given that arts and culture increase connection to community and place, the creative sector and their interests should be represented in placemaking discussions.

Arts, culture and creativity provide useful skills and spaces for the creation, development and expression of local identity and stories. These generate a sense of identity and community pride, as well as contributing to communities being a vibrant and safe place to live.⁶

Support for public funding of the arts remains fairly strong. Fifty nine percent of Waikato residents believe that the arts should receive public funding and 51% of Waikato residents support the idea that Council should help fund the arts.⁷

‘Around six in ten Waikato residents feel the arts are important in creating a vibrant place to live, and in their community’s future. They also want their community to be recognised as a place that supports the arts. [...] Fifty seven percent also feel that the arts benefit communities by contributing to resilience and wellbeing while 50% feel their community would be a poorer place without the arts.’⁸

‘Being highly engaged with arts, culture and creativity means that residents are also more likely to have stronger connections to community and to land and place’⁹

4 He piki tūranga, he piki kōtuku: The Future for Local Government (2023), p 32, [https://www.dia.govt.nz/diawebsite.nsf/Files/Future-for-Local-Government/\\$file/Te-Arotake_Final-report.pdf](https://www.dia.govt.nz/diawebsite.nsf/Files/Future-for-Local-Government/$file/Te-Arotake_Final-report.pdf)

5 Project for Public Spaces ‘What is Placemaking’ <https://www.pps.org/article/what-is-placemaking>

6 Ministry of Culture and Heritage, *Valuing the Arts in Australia and Aotearoa New Zealand* (2022), <https://www.mch.govt.nz/publications/valuing-arts-australia-and-aotearoa-new-zealand>

7 Creative New Zealand, ‘New Zealanders and the arts (2023)’ pg 21 <https://creativenz.govt.nz/-/media/project/creative-nz/creativenz/publicationsfiles/2024-nzers-and-the-arts/20240730nzartswaikatofinal.pdf>

8 Ibid.

9 Huber Social, ‘Wellbeing and Arts, Culture and Creativity in Waikato’ (Sydney: Huber Social, 2022), p.28, <https://creativewaikato.co.nz/advocacy/researchandreports>

SUGGESTED ACTIVITY FOR 2026–2029

Activate public spaces with arts-based play activities, and the creation of playable spaces that tell stories.

Utilise public art (murals, sculpture, light) to support the creation of safer spaces for all people.¹⁰

Embed artistic expression and cultural narratives in large-scale infrastructure projects to create unique regional identities.

Work with community partners to support the provision of accessible creative spaces and local storytelling.

Advocate to the central government for the development of a Provincial Arts Fund (similar to the Provincial Growth Fund) to support improved community liveability outcomes.¹¹

Explore and articulate the contribution made by arts activity, festivals and public art to the value of space, place and community in strategies, reports, and public communications.

CONNECTED COUNCIL DEPARTMENT AREAS

Community Services and Facilities

Parks and Reserves

Open spaces

Playgrounds

Libraries

Heritage

Property Services—Community

Land and Buildings

Housing for the Elderly

Emergency Management

Venues, Tourism and Events

Infrastructure

Theatres

Community Halls

I-sites

Transport, Roading and Footpaths

Roads

Footpaths and Cycleways

Road Safety Interventions and Education

Plans, Policies and Bylaws

Budgets

Policies

Bylaws

Reports

Strategies

Communication and Marketing

Provision of information to news media and stakeholders

Internal communications

Supporting engagement and consultation activities

Managing online and print channels

¹⁰ National Opinion Research Centre (USA), The Outcomes of Arts Engagement for Individuals and Communities (2021), <https://www.norc.org/content/dam/norc-org/pdfs/NORC%20Outcomes%20of%20Arts%20Engagement%20-%20Full%20Report.pdf>

¹¹ Regional Economic Development and Investment Unit | Kānoa, 'The Provincial Growth Fund', <https://www.growregions.govt.nz/established-funds/what-we-have-funded/the-provincial-growth-fund/>

Community Cohesion and Identity

Community cohesion and identity are key to collective wellbeing and a safe and productive society. Participation in community organisations and arts, culture and creative activities positively contributes to community connection.

Community cohesion is an important protective factor in the face of rapid change, polarisation, and disasters. In particular, social inclusion is a powerful determinant of wellbeing.¹²

1 in 6 people worldwide are affected by loneliness, with significant impacts on health and wellbeing.¹³

In Aotearoa, the 65+ population is projected to grow from 870,000 in 2024 to as many as 2.5 million by 2078, which may mean up to one-third of the population will be over 65. And it is not only growing numerically, but also structurally.¹⁴ Artistic, cultural and creative activities can be a powerful way to bring senior and isolated people together, and support wellbeing.¹⁵

In Aotearoa, 1,063,000 people identify as disabled. That is 24% of our population. Council can help facilitate access to creative spaces to provide creativity and opportunities for wellbeing.

Fifty five percent of Waikato residents agree that the arts make an important contribution to community resilience and wellbeing.¹⁶

Long-term loneliness has been proven to negatively affect physical and mental wellbeing outcomes.¹⁷ Globally, the estimated rate of loneliness are highest among adolescents (20.9% among 13-17 year olds) and young adults (17.4% among 18-29 year olds).¹⁸

The arts improve inter-generational relationships and connection to family and friends. “The arts act as a catalyst for bridging, bonding and linking social capital— it provides opportunities for engagement that reduce social isolation, encourages community cohesion, mutual support, improved intergenerational relationships and connection to family and friends.”¹⁹

¹² World Health Organization, ‘Social Determinants of Health’, https://www.who.int/health-topics/social-determinants-of-health#tab=tab_1

¹³ World Health Organisation 2025, ‘Social Connection linked to improved health and reduced risk of early death’ <https://www.who.int/news/item/30-06-2025-social-connection-linked-to-improved-health-and-reduced-risk-of-early-death>

¹⁴ Mercier, K, ‘Age-Proofing Aotearoa’ - Rethinking our infrastructure for an ageing population’ The Helen Clark Foundation, October 2025 <https://www.wsp.com/en-nz/news/2025/wsp-and-helen-clark-foundation-report-urges-future-proofing-infrastructure-for-ageing-population>

¹⁵ Arts Access Aotearoa, Ministry for Culture & Heritage: ‘Te kaha o ā tātou mahi: The power of our work Ngā Wāhi Whatunga Auaha — Creative Spaces Network. The Impact of multi-year investment for creative spaces’ 2024 <https://creativespacesnetwork.org.nz/impact-of-multi-year-investment-for-creative-spaces>

¹⁶ World Health Organisation 2025, ‘Social connection linked to improved health and reduced risk of early death’ <https://www.who.int/news/item/30-06-2025-social-connection-linked-to-improved-health-and-reduced-risk-of-early-death>

¹⁷ World Health Organization, ‘Decade of healthy Ageing, Advocacy Brief: Social Isolation and Loneliness Among Older People’, p.2, <https://www.who.int/publications/i/item/9789240030749>

¹⁸ World Health Organisation 2025, ‘From loneliness to social connection: charting a path to healthier societies’ p, 24 <https://www.who.int/groups/commission-on-social-connection/report>

¹⁹ VicHealth, ‘The arts and creative industries in health promotion’, (2020) p.17, https://www.vichealth.vic.gov.au/sites/default/files/VH_Sax-Arts-Review.pdf

60%

of Waikato residents agree that ‘The arts help define who we are as New Zealanders’.²⁰

76%

of Waikato residents feel proud when New Zealand artists succeed overseas.²¹

In Waikato, attending artistic, cultural and creative events or activities results in connections with diverse people.²²

“Residents who attend or create artistic, cultural or creative events or activities at least once a month report feeling more connected to culture and community, to land and place, and self... [They] feel that they have more opportunities to meet people who are different from them.”

55% of Waikato residents believe the arts make an important contribution to community resilience and wellbeing.²³

SUGGESTED ACTIVITY FOR 2026–2029

Support community groups who provide accessible group activities through increased investment and/or provision of space or other useful services. Currently, these are often run by passionate and long-serving volunteers, and burnout is a major factor.

Invest in infrastructure including shared and multi-use community spaces, and support their long-term maintenance.

Invest in community-driven expressions of arts and culture through grass-roots festivals, touring performances, and work that connects professional practitioners into remote communities. One option to achieve this is through match-funding the Creative NZ Creative Communities Scheme funding in your local community.

Recognise and support the many arts and culture organisations who serve senior and marginalised communities.

Support the development of local capability building to strengthen and support community organisations and activities.

CONNECTED COUNCIL DEPARTMENT AREAS

Community Services and Facilities

Parks and Reserves
Open spaces
Playgrounds
Libraries
Heritage
Property Services—Community
Land and Buildings
Housing for the Elderly

Venues, Tourism and Events

Infrastructure
Theatres
Community Halls
I-sites

Communication and Marketing

Provision of information to news media and stakeholders
Internal communications
Supporting engagement and consultation activities
Managing online and print channels

20 Creative New Zealand, New Zealanders and the Arts—Ko Aotearoa me ōna Toi—Survey findings for Waikato residents 2023’, p 12, <https://creativenz.govt.nz/-/media/project/creative-nz/creativenz/publicationsfiles/2024-nzers-and-the-arts/20240730nzartswaikatofinal.pdf>

21 Ibid, p.19

22 Huber Social, ‘Wellbeing and Arts, Culture and Creativity in Waikato’ (Sydney: Huber Social, 2022), p.50, <https://creativewaikato.co.nz/advocacy/researchandreports>.

23 Creative New Zealand, New Zealanders and the Arts—Ko Aotearoa me ōna Toi—Survey findings for Waikato residents 2023’, p 21, <https://creativenz.govt.nz/-/media/project/creative-nz/creativenz/publicationsfiles/2024-nzers-and-the-arts/20240730nzartswaikatofinal.pdf>

Culture and Heritage

The valuing of culture and heritage is key to a thriving community. When we honour our heritage, we are able to chart a hopeful and ambitious tomorrow.

Aotearoa's cultural heritage is part of our country's foundation and an important contributor to our personal, community and national identities. Preserving and conserving heritage places ensures that the stories, histories and events that reflect who we are and where we come from will continue to be experienced by future generations.²⁴

Te Tiriti is a korowai (cloak) of care for Aotearoa. Upholding Te Tiriti o Waitangi is a pathway for a shared future where all people in Aotearoa create good lives in a flourishing natural world. The Waikato region is home to many key

heritage sites, taonga and histories. Investment in our culture and heritage is investment in our people and our future. Cultural wellbeing is a key social impact outcome of activity enabled by the arts, culture and creative sector.²⁵

²⁴ Policy for Government Management of Cultural Heritage Places 2022—Manatū Taonga: Ministry for Culture and Heritage <https://www.mch.govt.nz/sites/default/files/2023-11/Policy-Government-Management-Cultural-Heritage-Places-2022.pdf>

²⁵ WEALL Aotearoa: Policy for the Public Good: A local government resource guide, p 1, 2025 <https://www.weall.org.nz/>

53%

of Waikato residents agree; 'Arts and cultural have a vital role to play in the future of where I live'.²⁶

74%

of Waikato residents attended or participated in the arts in the last 12 months.²⁷

SUGGESTED ACTIVITY FOR 2026–2029

Invest in the continued support of ngaa toi Maaori and the protection of taonga and maatauranga Maaori as essential expressions of Aotearoa.

Support the sharing of local histories, and supporting cultural education in schools that embrace the stories of local communities.

Where possible, invest in maintaining built heritage and recognising sites of significance to both tangata whenua and tangata tiriti.

Engage the knowledge and insights from local experts, mana whenua, and other national support like the team at the Ministry of Culture and Heritage, Manatū Taonga.

Support and invest in multi-cultural activities that celebrate the diversity of communities living in Waikato.

CONNECTED COUNCIL DEPARTMENT AREAS

Governance and Corporate
Decision-making functions and support

Community Services and Facilities

Parks and Reserves

Open spaces

Playgrounds

Public Toilets

Cemeteries

Libraries

Heritage

Property Services— Community Land and Buildings

Housing for the Elderly

Public Swimming Pools

Waste Management and

Minimisation

Emergency Management

Venues, Tourism and Events

Infrastructure

Theatres

Community Halls

I-sites

Transport, Roading and Footpaths
Roads

Footpaths and Cycleways

Road Safety Interventions

and Education

Planning and Regulatory

Animal Control

Building Compliance

Development Engineering

Environmental Health

Resource Consents/

Enforcements/Land

Information Memorandums

Plans, Policies and Bylaws

Budgets

Policies

Bylaws

Reports

Strategies

Communication and Marketing

Provision of information to news

media and stakeholders

Internal communications

Supporting engagement and

consultation activities

Managing online and print

channels

²⁶ Creative New Zealand, New Zealanders and the Arts—Ko Aotearoa me ōna Toi - Survey findings for Waikato residents 2023', p 21, <https://creativenz.govt.nz/-/media/project/creative-nz/creativenz/publicationsfiles/2024-nzers-and-the-arts/20240730nzartswaikatofinal.pdf>

²⁷ Ibid, p. 8.

Health and Wellbeing

Creativity is essential to community and individual wellbeing, and can be deployed in health treatments and settings.

There is a wealth of global evidence that reinforces the opportunity to shape better long-term outcomes through the inclusion of arts and creativity as a component of health treatment and recovery plans – this includes mental health.

Creative Wellbeing is a facet of holistic wellbeing, which embraces Maaori understandings of Hauora, as expressed in Te Whare Tapa Whā model.²⁸ It can be a lens through which to address physical, mental and emotional, family and social and spiritual wellbeing, as well as the need to connect with the whenua.²⁹

‘On average, Waikato residents who self-report having a high level of engagement with arts, culture and creativity have higher wellbeing than those who have little or no engagement. For all Waikato

residents, engagement with arts, culture and creativity has a positive relationship with overall wellbeing. The more often they attend, create or participate in artistic and cultural events, the higher their wellbeing is likely to be. This holds true regardless of engagement level or relationship with the creative sector.’³⁰

In Waikato, those who report being highly engaged with arts, culture and creativity have 5% higher overall wellbeing as compared to those with little or no engagement.³¹

Research has shown that passive engagement in arts and cultural activities is positively associated with higher life satisfaction, partially driven by the positive influence that passive art and cultural activities has on mental health.’³²

28 Sir Mason Durie, ‘Te Whare Tapa Whā’, Mental Health Foundation <https://mentalhealth.org.nz/te-whare-tapa-wha>

29 *ibid.*

30 Huber Social, ‘Wellbeing and Arts, Culture and Creativity in Waikato’ (Sydney: Huber Social, 2022), p.3, <https://creativewaikato.co.nz/advocacy/researchandreports>

31 Huber Social, Wellbeing and Arts, Culture and Creativity in Waikato, p.22.

32 Motu economic and public policy research – working paper ‘The impact of participation in arts and cultural activities on personal wellbeing’ <https://toimai.nz/wp-content/uploads/2024/11/Spreads-%E2%80%93-The-impact-of-participation-in-arts-and-cultural-activities-on-personal-wellbeing.pdf>

63%

of New Zealanders say the arts are good for my mental health and wellbeing.³³

40%

of New Zealanders say the arts are part of everyday life.³⁴

SUGGESTED ACTIVITY FOR 2026–2029

Support the activation of diverse art, culture and creativity in local spaces to support community access. This can be through both investment, and in supporting community use of space.

Share stories through council comms channels of local creative activity to support growing audiences and engagement.

Invest in locally-based creative spaces to support access and engagement.

Explore community-based artist-in-residence initiatives to encourage positive community outcomes through creative activity (see [Whiria Te Tāngata](#) as an example).³⁵

CONNECTED COUNCIL DEPARTMENT AREAS

Community Services and Facilities

Parks and Reserves
Open spaces
Playgrounds
Libraries
Heritage

Venues, Tourism and Events

Infrastructure
Theatres
Community Halls

Plans, Policies and Bylaws

Budgets
Policies
Bylaws
Reports
Strategies

Communication and Marketing

Provision of information to news media and stakeholders
Internal communications
Supporting engagement and consultation activities
Managing online and print channels

³³ Creative New Zealand, 'New Zealanders and the Arts 2023', https://creativenz.govt.nz/-/media/project/creative-nz/creativenz/publicationsfiles/2024-nzers-and-the-arts/20240320_nzersandthearts_adult.pdf, p 9.

³⁴ Ibid.

³⁵ Creative Waikato, 'You're going to want to hear about Whiria te Tangata', <https://creativewaikato.co.nz/news/youre-going-to-want-to-hear-about-whiria-te-tangata>

Economic Development

The arts, culture and creative ecosystem makes positive contributions to the prosperity of the region, and the country.

As well as generating income for people working in the arts, the creative sector creates tourism opportunities, supports innovation and collaboration, and can be engaged to promote towns and the region.

There is an exciting opportunity for this region to really champion our ngaa toi Maaori as a key component of our economic offering.

A thriving creative sector also contributes to hospitality industries, information economies and digital export. Supporting districts to develop strong arts, culture and creative presentations can become growth opportunities in the emerging 'experience economy'.³⁶ In this new economy, the power of art, culture and authenticity can't be denied. Brands partnering with artists can create emotional connections, turning products into meaningful symbols of identity and values.³⁷ An emergent experience economy in local

communities has the potential to transform opportunities as tourism flourishes both from national and international engagement.

The number of people employed in the arts is growing. Nationally, there are more than 117,912 people whose primary employment is in the arts and creative sector.³⁸ In Waikato, 7,182 people are employed in the arts.³⁹

A 'Skills in the creative sector' 2025 report states that the total sector's contribution is a \$19.1 billion or 5.8% of GDP, which includes the 'non-market' value generated via the consumption of creative services and volunteer time.⁴⁰ For every \$1 spent on live performance, \$3.20 is returned benefits to the wider community.⁴¹

36 B. Joseph Pine II and James H. Gilmore, 'Welcome to the Experience Economy', Harvard Business Review (1998) <https://hbr.org/1998/07/welcome-to-the-experience-economy>

37 Ana Cristina Rodriguez 'The rise of the experience economy: unlocking new opportunities for business success' 15 August 2025 <https://www.glion.edu/magazine/experience-economy-unlocking-new-opportunities-for-business-success/>

38 Ministry for Culture and Heritage, Manatū Taonga, 'Arts and creative sector economic profiles 2024', https://www.mch.govt.nz/sites/default/files/2025-03/Infometrics-report-Arts-and-creative-sector-profile-2024-one-pager_0.pdf

39 Ibid.

40 Shamubeel Eaqub, Rosie Collins and Nihal Sohanpal, Skills in the creative sector (Eaqub & Eaqub, 2025) <https://toimai.nz/wp-content/uploads/2025/09/Skills-in-the-creative-sector-report.pdf>

41 D, Carter, C, Hoad, P, Muller, A Tappenden, J, Wilson and O, Wilson 'Measuring and Articulating the Value of Live Performance in Aotearoa (Palmerston North: Massey University, November 2024) <https://www.massey.ac.nz/documents/2119/Measuring-and-Articulating-the-Value-of-Live-Performance-in-Aotearoa.pdf>

94%

of creative professionals participating in the gig economy find it difficult to secure loans for things like mortgages.⁴²

The creative sector includes many different kinds of work, including: visual arts, architecture, advertising, design, fashion, games, media, music, performing arts, photography, publishing, screen, and software.⁴³

There are 37,504 businesses in the arts and creative sector.⁴⁴ There are 7,182 creatives employed in the Waikato region.⁴⁵

30.3% of people with primary jobs in the arts and creative sector are self-employed, compared to 15.5% for the total economy.⁴⁶

SUGGESTED ACTIVITY FOR 2026–2029

Fund and support groups who are repurposing or acquiring multi-purpose spaces for creative practitioners to connect, work and showcase.⁴⁷

Maintain and increase investment in local events, public creative activities and organisations that will encourage tourism and local spending.

Engage artists and creatives in the design of civic spaces and new developments, in order to contribute to a unique sense of place, increased liveability, and attract and retain residents.

Support arts and creativity training programmes that support people to move into the industry and develop workforce pathways (for example Creative Waikato's ELEVATE programme).⁴⁸

CONNECTED COUNCIL DEPARTMENT AREAS

Venues, Tourism and Events

Infrastructure
Theatres
Community Halls
I-sites

Community Services and Facilities

Parks and Reserves
Open spaces
Playgrounds

Communication and Marketing

Provision of information to news media and stakeholders
Internal communications
Supporting engagement and consultation activities
Managing online and print channels

⁴² Kantar Public, 'Creative New Zealand on Air, A Profile of Creative Professionals' (2022), p.7.

⁴³ See <https://wecreate.org.nz/> for more information.

⁴⁴ Ministry of Culture and Heritage, Manatū Taonga, 'Arts and Creative Sector Profile 2024 Infometrics report summary'. https://www.mch.govt.nz/sites/default/files/2025-03/infometrics-report-Arts-and-creative-sector-profile-2024-one-pager_0.pdf

⁴⁵ Ibid.

⁴⁶ Ibid.

⁴⁷ 'Letting Space, Project 872 — accessed October 2025' <https://www.lettingspace.org.nz/#/project/872>

⁴⁸ Creative Waikato, 'Elevate Creative Careers Programme', <https://creativewaikato.co.nz/workshop/elevate-programme>

Tourism

People travel for unique cultural experiences – this is true around the world. In the Waikato region, Maaori culture contributes significantly to tourism and both national and international reputation.

So, the expression of local culture and shaping of interesting spaces has real potential for local and global tourism. Local events and festivals can share unique components of regional life.

In addition, the designation of cities as UNESCO cities of culture can contribute to local identity and economies, raise civic pride, and promote international collaboration and cooperation.

Creative tourism can help to combat challenges of seasonality and sustainability for the tourism sector.⁴⁹

Creative activation of spaces within the framework of UNESCO's City of Culture, can uplift local economies by supporting business and industry, attracting tourism, students and investment, and foster close-knit communities of creatives.⁵⁰

Creative tourism can support employment and retention of creative professionals in regional towns and city centres.

⁴⁹ The Creative Tourism Network, 'What do we mean by Creative Tourism?', <http://www.creativetourismnetwork.org/about/>

⁵⁰ 'The story behind the City of Design's new tohu' Te Ao News, 15 November 2024, Ellis, M., <https://www.teaonews.co.nz/2024/11/15/kick-ass-gorgeous-the-story-behind-the-city-of-designs-new-tohu/>

SUGGESTED ACTIVITY FOR 2026–2029

Include creative place-based storytelling in highly-frequented spaces like airports. Work with mana whenua to create powerful narratives and works. (For example, see the Hamilton Airport⁵¹ and New Plymouth Airport).⁵²

Invest and enable a ‘City of Culture’ programme in regional Aotearoa.⁵³

Support the development of Regional Maaori Cultural Tourism initiatives through seed funding and development (See collaboratively-funded projects like ‘Footprints of Kupe’).⁵⁴

Integrate creative expressions of te ao Maaori in all development: led by Maaori organisations to share the unique stories of this space. Maaori leadership can drive economic success while upholding cultural values.⁵⁵

Invest in unique experience-based tourism that combines creativity, tech and hospitality to create immersive artistic experiences that drive global interest (eg. TeamLab—Japan, MeowWolf—USA).⁵⁶ Waikato has the capability to deliver projects like this—also related to the emerging ‘experience economy’.⁵⁷

CONNECTED COUNCIL DEPARTMENT AREAS

Venues, Tourism and Events

Infrastructure
Theatres
Community Halls
I-sites

Community Services and Facilities

Parks and Reserves
Open spaces
Playgrounds

Communication and Marketing

Provision of information to news media and stakeholders
Internal communications
Supporting engagement and consultation activities
Managing online and print channels

51 Hamilton Airport, ‘Our Cultural Journey’, <https://www.hamiltonairport.co.nz/our-cultural-journey/#Artworks>

52 Creative New Zealand, ‘Building a whare manaaki that sings with stories’, (2023), <https://creativenz.govt.nz/news-and-blog/2023/12/04/02/19/16/building-a-whare-manaaki-that-sings-with-stories>

53 Gov.uk, ‘Government backs Bradford—UK City of Culture 2025— with £10 million funding boost’, <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/government-backs-bradford-uk-city-of-culture-2025-with-10-million-funding-boost>

54 Manea Tupuwae ā nuku | Footprints of Kupe, ‘The Footprints of Kupe Experience’, <https://maneafootprints.co.nz/experiences/footprints-of-kupe-experience/>

55 ‘A literature review of Māori leadership’. Prepared for Food and Fibre CoVE. July 2024

56 Team Lab, <https://www.teamlab.art/>; MeowWolf, <https://meowwolf.com/>

57 Joseph Pine II and James H. Gilmore, ‘Welcome to the Experience Economy’, Harvard Business Review, <https://hbr.org/1998/07/welcome-to-the-experience-economy>

Technology and Innovation

Creativity is key to innovation, and the intersection of arts and technology drives new ideas. Creativity can be found in many facets of modern society, but the arts provides a pure distillation of this process which can be utilised to inspire novel approaches and create new opportunities.

Art-informed innovation has the potential to be a catalyst for transformation — provided the right conditions are created to enable it.

The arts can also contribute to increased liveability in main centres and satellite towns, increasing attraction and retention of tech leaders and organisations.

International research shows that ‘lifelong participation in arts and crafts yields significant impacts for innovators and entrepreneurs. Arts and crafts experiences are significantly correlated with producing patentable inventions and founding new companies.’⁵⁸

Cultural and creative industries have become a vital force in accelerating

human development. They empower people to take ownership of their own development and stimulate the innovation that can drive inclusive sustainable growth.⁵⁹

Art-informed innovation has the potential to be a catalyst for transformation — provided the right conditions are created to enable it. The arts can also contribute to increased liveability in main centres and satellite towns, increasing attraction and retention of tech leaders and organisations.

A creative society fosters innovation and entrepreneurial risk taking.⁶⁰

⁵⁸ Rex LaMore, Robert Root-Bernstein, Michele Root-Bernstein, John H. Schweitzer, James L. Lawton, Eileen Roraback, Amber Peruski, Megan VanDyke, and Laleah Fernandez, ‘Arts and Crafts: Critical to Economic Innovation’, *Economic Development Quarterly*, p.1, Michigan State University (USA), 2013, <https://doi.org/10.1177/089124241348618>

⁵⁹ Hill, I, Elias, S, Jones, P and Dobson S ‘Creative and cultural industry entrepreneurship in the 21st century challenges by and for policymakers’, p 4, 2024 <https://oro.open.ac.uk/97345/1/Hill%20Chapter%201%20Hill%20et%20al.%20Policy%20challenges%20and%20creative%20industries.pdf>

⁶⁰ Shahid Yusuf ‘From creativity to innovation’, *Technology in Society* vol.31, (2009) pp.1–8.

Innovation springs from the creative application of knowledge. Thus, it has two essential ingredients: creativity – artistic, scientific or other – and a stock of knowledge.⁶¹

SUGGESTED ACTIVITY FOR 2026–2029

Have artists as part of Innovation working groups within council processes to create new ways to solve problems, and to communicate new ideas.

Nurture the intersection of arts and technology and innovation spaces to drive new ideas. (This could be done in partnership with other regional organisations).

Strengthen engagement with regional arts organisations to support strategic initiatives and enable connections between cross-sector organisations.

Encourage an artist-in-residence or ‘Innovation and Wellbeing Officer’ in council departments to inspire divergent outcomes.

Embed creativity in technological organisations, through initiatives such as Creativity Everyday.⁶²

CONNECTED COUNCIL DEPARTMENT AREAS

<p>Community Services and Facilities Parks and Reserves Open spaces Playgrounds Public Toilets Cemeteries Libraries Heritage Property Services – Community Land and Buildings Housing for the Elderly Public Swimming Pools Waste Management and Minimisation Emergency Management Venues, Tourism and Events Infrastructure</p>	<p>Planning and Regulatory Building Compliance Development Engineering Resource Consents/ Enforcements/Land Information Memorandums Plans, Policies and Bylaws Budgets Policies Bylaws Reports Strategies Communication and Marketing Provision of information to news media and stakeholders Internal communications Supporting engagement and consultation activities Managing online and print channels</p>
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⁶¹ Shahid Yusuf, ‘From creativity to innovation’, *Technology in Society*, vol. 31, Issue 1 (2009), <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.techsoc.2008.10.007>

⁶² Creative Waikato, ‘Creativity Everyday’, <https://creativewaikato.co.nz/creativityeveryday>

Environmental Sustainability

Climate change is a complex and urgent challenge, and it is essential that we establish new paradigms, collective understandings, and ways of living. In Aotearoa, we will benefit from acknowledging and working alongside Maaori and embracing their knowledge in this pursuit.

The arts can help bring people together to support a united collective vision for environmental sustainability. In addition, it is key to support engagement with local creativity, and to support local creative spaces so that communities can have access to sustainable creative experiences that support local communities.

Artists are brilliant at holding complexity. Making meaning, making sense, and building community around problems are their superpowers.⁶³

Human influence is key to halting the climate crisis.⁶⁴ The arts can be employed to influence cultural changes which can prompt urgent action.⁶⁵

Creativity can serve as a useful outlet for anxiety around climate change, and a powerful tool for finding imaginative solutions.⁶⁶ Somatic and physical creative practices can be useful tools for processing ecological grief.⁶⁷

The arts can be used to convey key information to the public and help the public to understand difficult or abstract ideas in affective, impactful ways.⁶⁸

63 'A Climate for Creative Action' 11 August 2025 <https://creative.gov.au/news-events/stories/climate-creative-action>

64 IPCC, 'Climate Change 2023: Synthesis Report. Contribution of Working Groups I, II and III to the Sixth Assessment Report of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change.' ed. H. Lee and J. Romero (Geneva: IPCC, 2023), pp. 35–115, doi: 10.59327/IPCC/AR6-9789291691647.

65 Artists and Climate Change, 'Organizations', <https://artistsandclimatechange.com/organizations/>

66 Nilescha Chauvet, Managing Director of GOOD, 'Grantham Institute Annual Lecture' (Imperial College London, 2022), <https://www.goodagency.co.uk/the-role-of-creativity-in-a-climate-crisis/>

67 Melody Schrieber, 'Addressing climate change concerns in practice', *American Psychological Association*, Vol. 52 No. 2, p. 30, <https://www.apa.org/monitor/2021/03/ce-climate-change>

68 Dr Philip Seargeant, Dr Nessa O'Mahony, and Dr Anne Caldwell, 'Climate Creativity: The power of the word to tackle the climate emergency', University of Oxford, <https://www.socsci.ox.ac.uk/climate-creativity-the-power-of-the-word-to-tackle-the-climate-emergency>

Arts and culture can inspire engagement and action in the fight against climate change. “The arts support the sciences because the arts can reach inside our hearts, not just our minds.”⁶⁹

SUGGESTED ACTIVITY FOR 2026–2029

Work alongside Maaori organisations and value Maaori art forms including, but not limited to: whakairo, waiata, whakatauki, raranga and ta moko, as key expressions of essential identity and knowledge, key to restoring the whenua.

Ensure that communities can have access to sustainable creative experiences that support local communities.

Support regional arts festivals, local tours, community-based creative activations and local venues and creative spaces, in order to reduce greenhouse gas emissions related to touring, including transporting large sets and casts.⁷⁰

Integrate and value creativity in scientific processes. Include artists and designers in all developments, opening possibilities including using nature to inspire designs and processes to solve human problems, in technological innovations for sustainability.⁷¹

Invest in local initiatives to explore sustainable public art as a way of redefining green space and creating opportunities for storytelling and engagement through art-based initiatives.

CONNECTED COUNCIL DEPARTMENT AREAS

Community Services and Facilities	Planning and Regulatory
Parks and Reserves	Building Compliance
Open spaces	Development Engineering
Playgrounds	Environmental Health
Public Toilets	Resource Consents/ Enforcements/Land Information Memorandums
Cemeteries	Plans, Policies and Bylaws
Libraries	Budgets
Heritage	Policies
Property Services—Community Land and Buildings	Bylaws
Housing for the Elderly	Reports
Public Swimming Pools	Strategies
Waste Management and Minimisation	Communication and Marketing
Emergency Management	Provision of information to news media and stakeholders
Venues, Tourism and Events	Internal communications
Infrastructure	Supporting engagement and consultation activities
Transport, Roading and Footpaths	Managing online and print channels
Roads	
Footpaths and Cycleways	
Road Safety Interventions and Education	

⁶⁹ Dr James Renwick, Climate Change Commissioner and Professor of Physical Geography at Te Herenga Waka | Victoria University of Wellington, ‘Art as Climate Action, Ministry for the Environment Manatū mō te Taiao (NZ)’, <https://environment.govt.nz/what-you-can-do/stories/art-as-climate-action/>

⁷⁰ Advisory Board for the Arts, ‘The Arts and Environmental Sustainability: A Guide to Key Areas’ <https://www.advisoryboardarts.com/the-arts-and-environmental-sustainability-a-guide-to-key-areas>

⁷¹ Lukas Gutierrez, ‘Art and Creativity: Essential Components of Sustainability’, <https://sustainable-earth.org/art-and-creativity/>

Arts in the workforce

Arts, culture and creativity is essential to a thriving wider workforce. Creativity is a driver for innovation, is a feature of emerging business research and is a vital skill set for many future-focussed employers.

Productivity per creative worker in New Zealand is on par with agriculture. Creativity is embedded in modern technology, it is a way we invent new opportunities, ideas and possibilities. It is also a key tool for sharing stories, solving problems, and expressing

When creativity is woven into workplaces, employees are happier and more productive. Workplace creativity contributes to employees who are more engaged, which contributes to satisfaction, quality of work, and deliverable outcomes.

Waikato residents who have jobs that require creative thinking or problem solving are more likely to have a higher level of satisfaction with their work.⁷³

Increasingly, organisations are needing to report on Environmental, Social and Governance measures (ESG's) within their work. Arts, Culture and Creativity can contribute to social wellbeing, by enabling cultural wellbeing.

Art activities in the workplace can have notable positive effects on the wellbeing of the staff. The effects exist over a wide range of measures, from brief moments of refreshment to longer-term impact.⁷⁴

By promoting creativity and self expression in the workplace, organisations can cultivate work environments where employees feel engaged, empowered and motivated.

And the worlds of creativity in the workplace are being explored by researchers in the field of **business, innovation, wellbeing, education, neuroscience, psychology, leadership, and more**. It is also being talked about by business sources like **Forbes, Harvard Business Review, Deloitte, McKinsey**

and Entrepreneur.

SUGGESTED ACTIVITY FOR 2026–2029

See creativity as part of Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) and Health & Safety (H&S) plans. This will nurture the wellbeing of employees, and generate innovative output for businesses.

Support the development and delivery of creative workplace wellbeing initiatives such as **Creativity Everyday**, which support creative problem solving, innovation and wellbeing.⁷⁵

Support council staff engaging with local creative activities as part of their own wellbeing and personal development.

CONNECTED COUNCIL DEPARTMENT AREAS

<p>Community Services and Facilities Parks and Reserves Open spaces Playgrounds Public Toilets Cemeteries Libraries Heritage Property Services – Community Land and Buildings Housing for the Elderly Public Swimming Pools Waste Management and Minimisation Emergency Management</p>	<p>Venues, Tourism and Events Infrastructure Plans, Policies and Bylaws Budgets Policies Bylaws Reports Strategies Communication and Marketing Provision of information to news media and stakeholders Internal communications Supporting engagement and consultation activities Managing online and print channels</p>
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73 Huber Social, Wellbeing and Arts, Culture and Creativity in Waikato (Sydney: Huber Social, 2022), p.41, <https://creativewaikato.co.nz/advocacy/researchandreports>

74 Heli Ansio, Pia Houni, Piia Seppälä and Jarno Turunen, 'Arts Enhances Well-being at Work', (Finland: Arts Equal, 2017), https://sites.uniarts.fi/documents/14230/0/PB_Arts+enhances+well-being+at+work/51fc5258-4ca6-4866-bd21-cca5c3946a5/

75 Creative Waikato, 'Creativity Everyday', <https://creativewaikato.co.nz/creativityeveryday>

Council-specific areas of consideration

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The following areas are those which relate specifically to the day-to-day work of Council. There are connections between different areas within Council which facilitate a more holistic and integrated approach to issues and problems and more joined-up solutions. These sections are matched with local

government departments and example initiatives that could be supported through localised investment and activation.

Please note: This will outline a range of local government department areas connected to our sector, and concludes with a specific arts, culture and creativity focus in summary.

Civic Engagement

In the past three decades Aotearoa has undergone a substantive demographic change. This is evident in the ethnic composition of the population, its age structure, and in the increase of those born outside of New Zealand.⁷⁶

Globally, voter turnout is declining and this is also a challenge facing local democracy in New Zealand.⁷⁷ An added complication is that Aotearoa has a large migrant population with varying experiences of politics and government in their countries of origin.

Positive participation in communities and local democracy can contribute to the sense of social cohesion. In an increasingly polarised society with its social media echo chambers and disinformation, civics and citizenship education is vital.⁷⁸

⁷⁶ Civics, Citizenship and Political Literacy Education for a Diversifying Nation in NZPSA Our Civic Future Civics, Citizenship and Political Literacy in Aotearoa New Zealand: A Public Discussion Paper. <https://nzpsa.com/resources/Documents/Our%20Civic%20Future.pdf>

⁷⁷ Victoria University of Wellington Panui 'Another local election, another low turnout? Syncing local and general elections could be the answer'

<https://www.wgtn.ac.nz/news/2025/09/another-local-election-another-low-turnout-syncing-local-and-general-elections-could-be-the-answer> 25 September 2025

⁷⁸ 'From the classroom to the public sector: The difference civics education can make' Hāpai Public Resource https://hapaipublic.org.nz/Article?Action=View&Article_id=150472 8 April 2024

Local government is all about community. Councils make decisions about local activity to ensure a healthy environment, thriving families and businesses, safe spaces for all and a culture that supports every individual's sense of belonging.⁷⁹

By collaborating with local government, artists can facilitate processes that amplify the voices of residents, activate neighbourhood assets, and foster a stronger social fabric, building bridges between city staff and communities.

If we want stronger communities with improved outcomes we need councils to work with local storytellers and trusted voices to enhance our collective civics education and understanding. This means engaging with artists to share information in an engaging and accessible way that can communicate effectively with different communities.

'We have the potential to do civics [education] in a really exciting way that's highly engaging and memorable and might last a lifetime'. Mana Rangatahi is a group focused on growing indigenous youth participation in climate change decision-making. Working with students from a position of the strengths they bring from their communities can really accelerate effective civic engagement.⁸⁰

The arts contribute uniquely to the works of civil engagement. Validating people's stories and perspectives, and bringing people together around shared goals. The arts are being more consciously and continuously engaged to achieve civic goals, and make change.⁸¹

SUGGESTED ACTIVITY FOR 2026–2029

Engage planners, regulatory and community services and artists to create a participatory art project on a particular issue i.e., getting to know your neighbour.

Commission work on a central theme to communicate with diverse audiences (see Kotahitanga⁸² as a local example).

CONNECTED COUNCIL DEPARTMENT AREAS

Community Services and Facilities Parks and Reserves Open spaces Playgrounds Public Toilets Cemeteries Libraries Heritage Property Services – Community Land and Buildings Housing for the Elderly Public Swimming Pools Waste Management and Minimisation Emergency Management Venues, Tourism and Events Infrastructure Theatres Community Halls I-sites	Transport, Roading and Footpaths Roads Footpaths and Cycleways Road Safety Interventions and Education Plans, Policies and Bylaws Budgets Policies Bylaws Reports Strategies Governance and Corporate Decision-making functions and support Communication and Marketing Provision of information to news media and stakeholders Internal communications Supporting engagement and consultation activities Managing online and print channels
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79 LGNZ New Zealand 'Local Government explained' <https://www.lgnz.co.nz/local-government-in-nz/local-government-explained/#:~:text=They're%20responsible%20for%20making,government%20is%20all%20about%20community>

80 Mana Rangatahi <https://deepsouthchallenge.co.nz/research-project/mana-rangatahi/>

81 The Review 'Art as a creative mode of civic engagement' (Oct, 2021) <https://www.uvureview.com/news/art-as-a-creative-mode-of-civic-engagement/>

82 Creative Waikato, <https://kotahitangagallery.nz/>

Community Services and Facilities

Libraries, museums, reserves, and community amenities are all important services that enable the community to participate and celebrate. These are core facilities that enable opportunities for learning, play and communities coming together.

Councils play a pivotal role in the wider ecosystem in supporting arts, culture and creativity to thrive. To achieve the broadest possible impact, it is essential to view the contribution of arts, culture and creativity which affects all facets of society.⁸³

Arts, culture and creativity can have an integral role in the design of local amenities. By incorporating local history or other elements that represent your community, these amenities can become

truly unique assets. They can also enhance public appreciation of arts and connect artists with communities. Working with artists is also a great way to activate community spaces and encourage participation and engagement.

The trend toward the establishment of integrated community hubs⁸⁴ and mixed-use developments, provides opportunities for Councils to ensure maximum benefit for our communities.

⁸³ Local Government Act 2022 - Section 11A - Core Services <https://www.legislation.govt.nz/act/public/2002/0084/167.0/DLM170873.html>

⁸⁴ Hamilton City Council 'Rototuna Village' <https://hamilton.govt.nz/strategies-plans-and-projects/projects/rototuna/rototuna-village/>

Ensuring facilities include spaces that are accessible to artists and community based arts groups, where they can make and show their work to audiences, is vital for community wellbeing.

SUGGESTED ACTIVITY FOR 2026–2029

Community houses work with local artist(s) to engage migrant communities about their ‘sense of belonging’.

Encourage the inclusion of creative spaces (workshops, rehearsal rooms, studios, etc) in other civic developments (buildings, libraries, sports facilities etc).

Support staff in council facilities to enable community access to space (activations in libraries, parks, and other council facilities).

Reduce administrative burden on individuals community groups trying to utilise public spaces for creative activity (event permits, space restrictions, busking permits etc).

Proactively address issues in civic bylaws regarding sound levels in public spaces. Take action to create legislative support (District Plan) that protects creative activity in the central city – this includes noise levels in music/performance spaces in connection with new urban residential developments. (see Ōtepoti Live Music Action Plan 2023 for example)⁸⁵

Maintain and increase investment into community providers of service including theatres, venues, and community houses.

CONNECTED COUNCIL DEPARTMENT AREAS

Community Services and Facilities	Planning and Regulatory
Parks and Reserves	Building Compliance
Open spaces	Development Engineering
Playgrounds	Resource Consents/
Public Toilets	Enforcements/Land
Cemeteries	Information Memorandums
Libraries	Plans, Policies and Bylaws
Heritage	Budgets
Property Services – Community	Policies
Land and Buildings	Bylaws
Housing for the Elderly	Reports
Public Swimming Pools	Strategies
Waste Management and	Communication and Marketing
Minimisation	Provision of information to news
Emergency Management	media and stakeholders
Venues, Tourism and Events	Internal communications
Infrastructure	Supporting engagement and
	consultation activities
	Managing online and print
	channels

⁸⁵ <https://www.dunedin.govt.nz/services/arts-and-culture/otepoti-live-music-action-plan>

Parks and Reserves

Parks and reserves provide opportunities for people to play, socialise, and connect with nature. They also provide space for people to engage in activities that foster community wellbeing.

Arts and culture connect us with our stories, landscapes and places, and New Zealand's history and heritage.⁸⁶ These spaces serve as a hub for community gatherings and events, and often include amenities such as playgrounds, walking trails, and seats.

⁸⁶ Ministry for Arts, Culture and Heritage 'Briefing to the Incoming Associate Minister for Arts, Culture and Heritage—February 2023' p.2 <https://www.beehive.govt.nz/sites/default/files/2023-03/BIM%20-%20Assoc.%20Minister%20for%20Arts%2C%20Culture%20and%20Heritage.pdf>

Artwork in parks can often perform a dual function, such as a seat, fence, or bridge. The opportunity to integrate art into these functions can make this equipment engaging and interesting.

The Waikato community values greater programming and promotion of youth and family-friendly events.⁸⁷

Storytelling through signage, interpretation, and art can provide educational opportunities and protect the unique cultural heritage of the Waikato region.⁸⁸

SUGGESTED ACTIVITY FOR 2026–2029

Support local artists and practitioners to create a strong sense of cultural identity, by integrating history and Māori, Pasifika and other communities into the design.

Engage with local artists to create environmentally aware light-based artworks that provide opportunities for storytelling alongside positive safety outcomes for communities.

Work with local artists on the design and development of art-informed play environments. For more ideas around this, please contact Creative Waikato for information, including the emerging ‘Play with Arts, Culture and Creativity’ strategy.

CONNECTED COUNCIL DEPARTMENT AREAS

Community Services and Facilities	Plans, Policies and Bylaws
Parks and Reserves	Budgets
Open spaces	Policies
Playgrounds	Bylaws
Public Toilets	Reports
Heritage	Strategies
Property Services – Community Land and Buildings	Communication and Marketing
Planning and Regulatory	Provision of information to news media and stakeholders
Building Compliance	Internal communications
Development Engineering	Supporting engagement and consultation activities
Resource Consents/Enforcements/Land Information Memorandums	Managing online and print channels

⁸⁷ Huber Social, ‘Wellbeing and Arts, Culture and Creativity in Waikato’ (Sydney: Huber Social, 2022), p.20, <https://creativewaikato.co.nz/advocacy/researchandreports>

⁸⁸ Hamilton City Council ‘Open Spaces Strategy’ p.14. <https://hamilton.govt.nz/strategies-plans-and-projects/strategies>

Growth

Arts, culture and creativity can be woven into key hard infrastructure projects, to provide distinct places of interest and increase community ownership.

Cultural storytelling, and in particular in collaboration with Mana Whenua, can be pivotal in expressing place-specific identities and ideas.

Societies function well when they exhibit a level of cohesiveness that allows them to work for the mutual benefit of all their diverse members, despite differing world views, identities, and values. Societal well-being therefore depends on maintaining social cohesion.⁸⁹

Crime Prevention through Environmental Design (CPTED) can help to protect infrastructure from damage. Public art can contribute to social cohesion, community care, and connectivity, key elements of CPTED.⁹⁰

Culturally relevant art can increase engagement with public spaces and aid urban revitalisation.⁹¹

Public Art can contribute to feelings of safety and security, and so support engagement and community care within spaces.⁹²

Hard infrastructure provides ‘third spaces’ which can be activated in support of community wellbeing, and it is people who create activity and connection in these spaces. There is a demand for this activation, as growing communities look for things to do and ways to connect with one another.

In the community space, much of this activity, connection and positive outcomes are enabled by volunteers and community groups, who donate their time, skills and energy to serving their communities.

⁸⁹ Gluckman, P, Bardsley, A, Spoonley, P, Royal, C, Simon-Kumar, N and Chen, A ‘Koi Tu Report Dec 2021, p, 4 ‘The Centre for Informed Futures’ The University of Auckland ‘Sustaining Aotearoa New Zealand as a cohesive society’ <https://informedfutures.org/wp-content/uploads/pdf/Sustaining-Aotearoa-New-Zealand-as-a-cohesive-society.pdf>

⁹⁰ The International Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design Association, ‘Primer: What is CPTED?’ <https://www.cpted.net/Primer-in-CPTED>

⁹¹ Siti Syamimi Oma, ‘Bringing the New to the Old: Urban Regeneration through Public Arts’, *Procedia – Social and Behavioral Sciences*, Vol. 234, pp. 515-524, <https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S1877042816315245>

⁹² Partners for Livable Cities, ‘Public Art: More than Just a “Picture on the Wall” – a Vehicle for Crime Prevention’, <http://livable.nonprofitsoapbox.com/component/content/article/9-livability-live/474-public-art-more-than-just-a-picture-on-the-wall-a-vehicle-for-crime-prevention>

Community activation of third spaces is referred to as soft infrastructure. This is the central and measurable driving force behind the diversity of cultural expression, the quality of creative output, and the continuously growing local, national and international reputation of the creative storytelling of this region.

Investment in people, and investment from people, contributes to the success, sustainability and strength of the creative ecosystem. This, in turn, can make measurable contributions to a thriving community and society.

These ecosystems make ongoing investments into our community, and contribute positively to civic pride, regional reputation, social value, and collective wellbeing. It is vital that there is civic investment and support for the growth and maintenance of all facets of soft infrastructure – with a central focus on people.

Recent Waikato research shows that creative professionals experience significantly lower access to essential resources than those outside of the sector. This includes 8% lower local employment, 4% less access to affordable housing, and increased anxiety.⁹³

Artists in communities provide direct access to creative activities which can have benefits for wellbeing.

Investment in this soft infrastructure delivers on the core work of local government.⁹⁴

Government investment in creativity not only delivers economic benefit.⁹⁵ Having accessible community art can “range from individual to collective betterment, and from, community to broader positive societal impacts”.⁹⁶

Supporting local creatives to deliver local community initiatives supports community wellbeing.⁹⁷

It is key to acknowledge and educate the public about the volunteer labour that enables quality community outcomes.⁹⁸

Hard infrastructure projects can hold space for multiple community uses, and low-cost inclusions can promote use.

Accessibility of creative activity is a key driver of wellbeing, so it is vital to invest in the providers of diverse creative activity to ensure that accessibility is maintained, while recognising the valued contributions made by creative organisations.⁹⁹

93 Huber Social, ‘Wellbeing and Arts, Culture and Creativity in the Waikato: How to Support Our Creative Professionals’, https://creativewaikato.co.nz/site/uploads/CW-Creative-Professionals-Report-2023_Final.pdf, p.13

94 <https://www.lgnz.co.nz/local-government-in-nz/local-government-explained/>

95 <https://www.beehive.govt.nz/release/govt-investment-arts-delivers-strong-economic-results>

96 Darcy, Clay (2021) “Cohesive Magic, Creative Collective Expression: Community Arts in Ireland and Their Beneficial Role in Youth Work and Community Development,” Irish Journal of Applied Social Studies: Vol.21: Iss. 1, Article 6 <https://arrow.tudublin.ie/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1382&context=ijass>

97 See Creative Waikato pilot programme ‘Whiria Te Tāngata’ for example: <https://thespinoff.co.nz/society/07-02-2024/creative-waikatos-whiria-te-tangata-bears-the-fruit-of-community-investment>

98 NZ Volunteering data and value: <https://www.volunteeringnz.org.nz/research/volunteering-statistics-nz/>

99 https://creativewaikato.co.nz/site/uploads/HS_Creative-Waikato_Wellbeing-and-Arts-Culture-and-Creativity-in-the-Waikato_FINAL.pdf

It is essential to gather data around the use of community space, and what activities take place within them, and by which local groups.

SUGGESTED ACTIVITY FOR 2026–2029

Combine elements of placemaking with civic infrastructure, such as through using light sculptures on public areas, in order to provide safety, community interest and storytelling.

Establish a Creative Ambassador to promote and facilitate connections and opportunities around infrastructure developments.

Prioritise strength-based investment into the soft infrastructure already delivering in your community. Consider implementing multi-year granting, and streamlining reporting requirements.

Work in partnership with creative leaders in your community to activate council spaces, and provide creative communities with spaces and places to make and create.

Explore the development and support of creative hubs in your communities. Examples include: The Incubator (Tauranga), Toi Pōneke (Wellington), Te Atamira (Queenstown).

Support the incorporation of creative elements into essential infrastructure in order to create vibrant urban environments. This plays ‘an important role in supporting social and economic regeneration’.¹⁰⁰

CONNECTED COUNCIL DEPARTMENT AREAS

Community Services and Facilities

Parks and Reserves
Open spaces
Playgrounds
Public Toilets
Cemeteries
Libraries
Heritage
Property Services— Community
Land and Buildings
Housing for the Elderly
Public Swimming Pools
Waste Management and
Minimisation
Emergency Management

Venues, Tourism and Events

Infrastructure
Theatres
Community Halls
I-sites

Transport, Rooding and Footpaths

Roads
Footpaths and Cycleways
Road Safety Interventions
and Education

Planning and Regulatory

Animal Control
Building Compliance
Development Engineering
Environmental Health
Resource Consents/
Enforcements/Land
Information Memorandums

Plans, Policies and Bylaws

Budgets
Policies
Bylaws
Reports
Strategies

Communication and Marketing

Provision of information to news
media and stakeholders
Internal communications
Supporting engagement and
consultation activities
Managing online and print
channels

100 Lisa Wilkie, ‘What is Arts & Creativity in Infrastructure?’, Ara Toi Ōtepoti, <https://hail.to/ara-toi/publication/jhKgoah/article/H4HUAhc>

Plans, Policies and Bylaws

Plans, policies and bylaws affect all citizens, including those working in the arts and culture space. There is an opportunity to integrate a holistic approach to these decision making processes which includes and draws on the strengths of the creative ecosystem.

It is also important to have a strategic vision for how city growth may impact and engage with the creative sector – this includes capacity for events in public spaces, development of CBD residential and required sound level consideration and mitigation, provision and support for street performance/busking, public art development and activation, etc.

Creative Waikato is available to support as a strategic advisory partner, in order to provide sector-informed and evidence-based insight to assist council in these developments. For initial information, see our community-led, regional arts and culture strategy, the Waikato Arts Navigator (WAN).¹⁰¹ The WAN, alongside the Waikato Performing Arts strategy¹⁰² have been developed to support collective impact in the wider region, while supporting each council to identify their own priorities and focus areas with their communities.

SUGGESTED ACTIVITY FOR 2026–2029

Meet with Creative Waikato to explore how arts, culture and creativity can meaningfully connect with council planning and bylaws.

Adopt the Waikato Arts Navigator as council’s arts and culture policy, and then develop a targeted action plan.

Appoint a Creativity Officer or Creative Ambassador with a purpose to support and deliver positive outcomes for the arts, culture and creative community.

Consider how red tape around live performances and public events can be simplified.

Explore engagement with arts, culture and creative providers for social procurement and positive wellbeing outcomes.

Support the delivery and expansion of the Creative Communities Scheme funding.

CONNECTED COUNCIL DEPARTMENT AREAS

Community Services and Facilities	Planning and Regulatory
Parks and Reserves	Building Compliance
Libraries	Development Engineering
Heritage	Environmental Health
Property Services— Community Land and Buildings	Resource Consents/Enforcements/Land Information Memorandums
Venues, Tourism and Events	Plans, Policies and Bylaws
Infrastructure	Budgets
Theatres	Policies
Community Halls	Bylaws
I-sites	Reports
Transport, Roading and Footpaths	Strategies
Roads	
Footpaths and Cycleways	

¹⁰¹ Creative Waikato, ‘Waikato Arts Navigator’, https://creativewaikato.co.nz/site/uploads/Waikato-Arts-Navigator-Regional-Strategy_2023.pdf

¹⁰² Creative Waikato, ‘Performing Arts Strategy’, https://creativewaikato.co.nz/site/uploads/CW094-Performing-Arts-Strategy_FULL-A4-Document_04.pdf

Arts, Culture, Creativity and Ngaa Toi Maaori

As expressed throughout this briefing, arts, culture, creativity and ngaa toi Maaori can and should be woven through all facets of the core work of local government in the vision and delivery of a productive, thriving and flourishing district and region into the future.

In exploring the work of councils supporting all communities to thrive and be connected, we must acknowledge the vital role of our creative ecosystem in being a contributor to that.

Arts, culture and creativity should be activated by all components of local government as an essential contributor to human capital, social cohesion, positive impact and wellbeing.¹⁰³

Local governments can support local activity by advocating to ministries and the central government for increased regional investment in this sector.

Arts, culture and creativity are a core public good that provides measurable benefits for the mental and physical health of all New Zealanders.

The creative ecosystem contributes to innovation, and to our regional storytelling, both to ourselves and to international audiences.

Artists are skilled practitioners whose work should be utilised to help develop innovative pathways for future success.

¹⁰³ For national and international evidence of this impact, see: Creative Waikato, 'Briefing to Incoming Ministers, 2023/2024', <https://creativewaikato.co.nz/site/uploads/Creative-Waikato-Briefing-to-Incoming-Ministers.pdf>

WHAT IS MOST IMPORTANT?

Increase investment in the creative ecosystem in a sustainable way that supports community impact, and acknowledges the importance of accessibility and wellbeing.

Develop lasting strategic partnership relationships with Creative Waikato as the regional arts organisation, to grow capability and utilise sector-specific insights and impacts.

Embed the Waikato Arts Navigator as a council strategic document and commit to developing a council-specific Arts Action plan in alignment with your LTP, this briefing advice, and community consultation.

THIS STRATEGIC APPROACH SHOULD INCLUDE

Vibrant and diverse arts, culture and creativity that starts in flax roots community activity and develops through into sustainable creative careers.

Telling our stories and embracing te ao maaori and nga toi maaori in all its forms as the unique expression of this country.

Enabling accessible creativity and daily creative expression for all people in our communities.

SUGGESTED ACTIVITY FOR 2026–2029

Engage with artists and local advisors, alongside Creative Waikato, to explore the possibilities to embed creative activations across all core council business.

Maintain and increase council investment in the areas of arts, culture and creativity—both within council operational activity, and in community granting and support.

Invest in Creative Waikato as a strategic regional arts organisation (alongside other regional sector organisations in Sport, Economic Development, Tourism etc) to support localised activity, capability and strategic regional impact (in partnership with community trusts and central government).

Work collaboratively to enhance community arts activity and infrastructure through a regionalised partnership approach.

CONNECTED COUNCIL DEPARTMENT AREAS

Community Services and Facilities

Parks and Reserves
Open spaces
Playgrounds
Public Toilets
Cemeteries
Libraries
Heritage
Property Services—
Community Land and Buildings
Housing for the Elderly
Public Swimming Pools
Waste Management and Minimisation
Emergency Management

Venues, Tourism and Events

Infrastructure
Theatres
Community Halls
I-sites

Transport, Rooding and Footpaths

Roads
Footpaths and Cycleways
Road Safety Interventions and Education

Planning and Regulatory

Animal Control
Building Compliance
Development Engineering
Environmental Health
Resource Consents/
Enforcements/
Land Information
Memorandums

Plans, Policies and Bylaws

Budgets
policies
bylaws
reports
strategies

Governance and Corporate
Decision-making functions and support

Who we are

Creative Waikato is the regional arts organisation for the Waikato region, which includes 10 local authorities – Thames-Coromandel, Hauraki, Matamata-Piako, Waikato, Waipā, Hamilton, Waitomo, Ōtorohanga, South Waikato and Ruapehu.

Our area of activity and engagement also connects with four Iwi – Waikato-Tainui, Hauraki, Raukawa and Maniapoto.

We have been working extensively across Waikato since 2012 and have experience and understanding of the diverse array of artforms found throughout our region. We are navigators who lead the elevation of creativity in our region

and collaborate to provide opportunities for cultural wellbeing. We provide creative capability development for artists and arts organisations, strategic direction and support for sustainable arts, culture and heritage in our region.

Our vision

Waikato
thrives with
diverse and
transformative
creative
activity

What does this mean?

The arts, culture and creativity 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, arts and cultural organisations and arts activity are seen as being a vital part of the Waikato region and the wellbeing of its people.

What we can do for councils, elected councillors and staff

Provide localised insights and facilitate connections with front-line community and facilitators.

Deliver regionalised activity that aligns with our regional strategy (which links to community trusts, philanthropy and local government).

Serve as regional sector advisory to support policy, cross-department planning, outcomes and insight, and to support activation of the regional strategy and local action plan.

Continue to deliver our capability building programmes and strategic sector influence in the Waikato Region. Supporting creatives, organisations, and other enablers to work collaboratively to develop and deliver innovative district and regional outcomes.

Next steps

Meet together to share our current insights, work and impact.

Connect with council executive leadership and staff to support future development and strengthen our strategic relationship.

Support council engaging with 'Creativity Every Day' as our koha to you and your staff.

Please contact

Creative Waikato CEO

Dr. Jeremy Mayall

jeremy@creativewaikato.co.nz

Key links

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

[https://creativewaikato.co.nz/
advocacy/waikato-arts-navigator](https://creativewaikato.co.nz/advocacy/waikato-arts-navigator)

[https://creativewaikato.co.nz/
news/understanding-the-value-
of-arts-culture-and-creativity](https://creativewaikato.co.nz/news/understanding-the-value-of-arts-culture-and-creativity)

[https://creativewaikato.co.nz/
creativityeveryday](https://creativewaikato.co.nz/creativityeveryday)

Creativity.
Auahatanga.
Wellbeing.
Hauora.
People.
Ngā Tāngata.