

## 12-MONTH SERVICE PROVIDER KEY OBSERVATIONS REPORT FOR:

# ELEVATE





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*ELEVATE is a part of the Ministry of Social Development and Ministry of Culture and Heritage, Creative Careers pilot programme delivered by Creative Waikato for the Waikato Region*

## Purpose

The purpose of this report is to provide a mid-service review of the current delivery of the ELEVATE Creative Careers pilot programme currently being delivered by Creative Waikato in the Waikato Region.

## Background

On 22 February 2021 the Waikato iteration of the Creative Careers pilot programme began. Year one of the two year pilot programme is now complete.

## ABOUT CREATIVE WAIKATO

Creative Waikato is a Regional Arts Organisation – a non-profit entity that operates regionally in the Waikato to provide creative capability development for artists, alongside providing strategic direction and support for sustainable arts, culture and heritage in the region. The strategic focus for this organisation is that the Waikato prospers with diverse and transformative creative activity, and we work as the navigators who lead the elevation of creativity in our region and collaborate to provide opportunities for cultural well-being. This strategy has been tailored in response to the needs, aspirations and strategic priorities of the region's arts, culture and heritage sectors and communities.





## ABOUT ELEVATE

ELEVATE is a 9-month programme delivered by Creative Waikato, that helps and supports Waikato creative practitioners into achievable, financially viable, and sustainable creative careers. Through weekly skill building workshops, and expert one-on-one support from specialist mentors, ELEVATE has been designed to support artists in developing those extra skills, knowledge and resources that can help them carve a realistic pathway toward their career goals.

Participants are supported to build networks, to develop sustainable approaches to their practice, and to diversify opportunities to develop a viable living through creative practice. Developing creative careers requires a unique approach. Through the ELEVATE Programme participants have access to:

- A suite of 25 capability building skills workshops and resources
- 1:1 Mentoring services
- Networking and a community of practice
- Career guidance and advice
- Personal Development Plans
- Resilience and wellbeing support
- Practical business advice
- Approaches to different income streams in support of freelance/gig economy
- Access to a team of professionals who have lived experience of creative careers

This report has been designed to highlight successful components of the programme, as well as to share the challenges that have been faced through the first year of implementation. This will conclude with some future recommendations for consideration.

*“One of the biggest impacts that has come out of Elevate is this realisation  
“yes, I am an artist, I am worthy of saying this”.  
Without Elevate and the contact with my advisor and the other participants,  
I would have been isolated, working alone in my studio.  
I now feel really connected to an arts community”*





## Key Findings

1. ELEVATE is directly contributing to the purpose of MSD in enabling New Zealanders to be strong, safe, and independent
2. ELEVATE is directly contributing to the resilience and determination of the creative sector in the wider Waikato Region
3. ELEVATE is providing informed support that has been designed to serve the creative sector.
4. ELEVATE is an inclusive programme that supports independent artists to better connect with their communities.
5. ELEVATE is providing support for the sector to find and retain creative careers by supporting pathway development between emerging and successful artists.
6. ELEVATE is delivered by creative practitioners and this is a strength of continued engagement with participants.
7. ELEVATE has a direct link to helping participants become more successful in their lives. They are strengthening their creative portfolios and developing diverse careers.
8. ELEVATE is supporting artists to develop a broader range of soft-skills that help with time-management, motivation, confidence and wellbeing. This is a vital part of the programme considering the current climate.
9. ELEVATE has had a slower service uptake than initially predicted, largely due to timing and COVID impacts, but the service continues to grow and the ongoing results are demonstrating a positive trend within the sector towards the programme. There is clear value in continuing with the pilot to allow time for the sector to re-engage post omicron restrictions.
10. COVID19 and the broader pandemic situation has had a profound impact on the sector and in turn the delivery of this programme. This includes lockdown in the Waikato, ongoing omicron impacts, and people temporarily leaving the sector to wait for the return of regular activity. This has a substantial impact on our ability to assess longer-term outcomes accurately. As this is a 9-month programme, that has been implemented in cohorts to support the development of a community of practice, the scope of delivery has been compromised consistently by the pandemic. It would be appropriate to explore a service agreement extension period or re-consideration of the contract end date (potential extension from 2 to 4 years).





## What has worked

1. The series of workshops have been created by creative practitioners and are informed by sector knowledge to be accessible and responsive to the complexities of the sector
2. The workshops cover a full range of the skills needed to have a reliable creative career, but are also framed with a realistic understanding of how a creative career can function in the regions.
3. The design of the ELEVATE programme has cohorts of practitioners from different art forms going through the workshop series together to provide peer support, networking, and an ongoing community of practice. This has inspired a process of sharing, ongoing support and collaboration.
4. The ELEVATE programme has been designed with details from other Creative Waikato capability building programmes, so is robust and tested. It functions in an in-person and online environment.
5. The ELEVATE programme serves to provide additional support for the creative sector through the wider Creative Waikato advisory and advocacy roles.
6. The ability to pivot our programme to continue to provide support throughout lockdowns, and as such providing our creative community with ongoing connection and support throughout the pandemic.
7. Creating opportunities for participants to work within the wider sector and beyond into connections with business, education and local government.
8. Supporting participants to review how their career might work within the context of their creative practice. Helping them to determine the different pathways to work, to utilising creative process as a wellbeing tool, and working to build sector resilience and diversity of activity in a changing climate.
9. Delivery of online content as a way to service the wider Waikato Region in a reliable and consistent manner, and ensuring through our own resilience that online mentoring sessions, digital workshops and other pathways for support are shared with all participants.
10. ELEVATE is providing an important extension to the previous capability building programmes that Creative Waikato offered in our region. It has enabled us to increase our capacity to provide much needed support for our sector in a consistent and longer-term manner.

## KEY INSIGHTS

- 98 Participants have been fully engaged with the programme
- 25 specialist workshops have been developed, tested and implemented
- 104 workshops have been delivered (both in-person and online)
- 436 approximate number of one-on-one mentoring hours
- 21% of participants identify as Māori or Pacific People
- Majority of participants work in Visual Arts (30%) and Craft/Object Art (17%)

*"Many thanks for a great programme, am getting heaps out of it and such amazing motivation!!... we have a very interesting and diverse set of participants which makes for some great discussions."*



## Successes and value the programme has offered

- Diversity of programme participants. Wide mix of artforms and cultural backgrounds.
- Vital support support and manaakitanga to people within the sector suffering through the COVID pandemic.
- Despite pandemic issues, programme delivery continued and numbers continued to grow.
- Access to and participation in diverse and rich learning experiences in a current & post-COVID environment
- Designed with a long-term focus in mind to build successful individuals. This will allow participants to create careers that can continue to grow when COVID-19 conditions allow
- Increasing the ability for all New Zealanders to access local creative experiences through a more sustained creative sector.
- Encouraging a broader understanding of the impacts of creativity in participants to support engagement in their communities.
- A thriving creative sector makes a positive contribution to wider COVID economic recovery.
- This programme enables future pathways previously missing in the arts and culture sector.

*“I also made many meaningful connections with other artists throughout my time at Elevate. We supported each other's aspirations and were guided by the amazing crew at Creative Waikato.”*

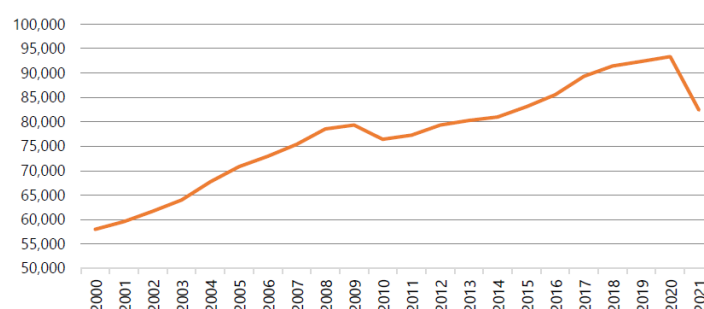
## Impact of COVID-19

Broadly speaking the re-emergence of COVID-19 in 2021 could not have come at a worse time for the creative economy in New Zealand. Participation in the Arts Sector can contribute to community cohesion, reduce social exclusion and isolation, and/or make communities feel safer and stronger.

According to modelling undertaken by Infometrics: “Impact of COVID-19 on the Arts and Creative Sector” for Ministry of Culture and Heritage in April 2020, the arts and creative sector will be continue to be hit hard by the COVID-19 recession.

Chart 1

Employment in the arts and creative sector  
Infometrics forecast to March 2021



Ref. B Source: Infometrics: “Impact of COVID-19 on the Arts and Creative Sector” for Ministry of Culture and Heritage April 2020. Prepared by Alistair Schorn and Andrew Whiteford, with assistance from Paul Barkle and Dr. Adolf Stroombergen.



Some of the impacts felt across our programme and the sector due the pandemic, have included:

- Substantial reduction in employment opportunity for our participants specialising in performing arts, events, music and creative festivals
- Significant losses for countless creative businesses, leading to serious disruption to the creative industry have hampered our participant's ability to deliver successful increased financial outcomes in this period
- Creatives require an environment to co-create, network, interact and work as a community. A loss of ability to deliver in person has severely hampered this service in this time
- Clients experiencing Zoom fatigue as full day workshops were delivered online
- A spike in clients suffering from anxiety, depression, lack of motivation, mental wellbeing and required additional emotional support and understanding from the team
- Dropping off in engagement and participation and early withdrawals due to the fragility of the participants
- Unvaccinated clients unable to network with other participants due to Government mandates.
- Lack of ability to engage with students at the end of the their tertiary studies due to lockdowns. This has limited the potential for future participants of the programme.
- Practitioners choosing to leave the sector due to the large scale lack of work, and looking to return in the future, but limits availability to participate in the programme.

Now, more than ever the creative sector needs continued support from dedicated subject matter experts to build capability and employment pathways to support and bolster the rebuild of the sector over the coming years.

*"It makes me realise that there's no such thing  
as an intrinsically organised or intrinsically chaotic person.  
I can actually choose to be an organised person."*





## Success Stories

- Getting a job at Council where they can use their illustration
- Securing a contract with a high-end gallery/shop in Wellington
- Selling all the pieces in a ceramics exhibition for \$6700
- Designing and running a beginners art class programme
- Having a short film accepted into an international film festival
- Getting a full time graphic design job
- Releasing first music single
- Receiving \$20,000 Te Urungi Seed funding to develop a project idea
- Realising that they don't want to put the pressure on their creative practice of it being their main earner and getting a ranger job with DOC

*"I learnt that many of us in the arts feel like  
we aren't the real deal, when the opposite is true.  
We are artists and Elevate showed us  
how important it is to value our gifts"*

## Testimonials

*"Elevate covers most nitty, gritty parts of owning a creative business. It helped me be more confident approaching music as a business and realizing that I could make my craft, my career. It was also inspiring and way less intimidating to do this alongside awesome and talented creative people, wanting to share their work and passions"*

*"Elevate helped debunk a lot of myths I had made up about the industry I wanted to get into, such as needing to move to Auckland to have an income dependent on film work. Creatively, I was on the right track, but Elevate showed me with changes in thinking, time management and structure, I could be more in control of my success than I thought. In the strange covid we live in with a lot of uncertainty, this was perfect timing."*

*"I would highly recommended Elevate to anyone wanting to push their creative career."*

*"I found the project planning workshops super helpful, practical and immediately useful. It was a strength to have a nice mentor to hold me accountable and encourage me to tackle my goals. I also really appreciated the inclusion of karakia to start and end each workshop"*

*"I have set up a small studio and created a website (finally!). I also made many meaningful connections with other artists throughout my time at Elevate. We supported each other's aspirations and were guided by the amazing crew at Creative Waikato. Every workshop session was memorable and a highlight in itself."*



## CASE STUDIES

Participant A started with a sense that she wasn't really an artist because she wasn't making art. She quickly learnt to prioritise creating for a short time each day. This led to her posting and selling her work on-line. This led to her teaching an art class, alongside other teaching work. She is now proud to be able to call herself an artist.

Participant B worked hard on her online creative journaling business. After 9 months on the programme, trying out different techniques, she recognised that she doesn't want to do the marketing work required to run this kind of business. Instead, she will keep her creativity for her personal enjoyment, and study towards a more traditional employment role. She credits the Elevate Programme with helping have the clarity and confidence to do this.

Participant C has been building her singing tuition business. She is hitting all her milestones for growth in student numbers, and is becoming more and more skilled in using social media to reach her target audience. She has just applied for the MSD Business Grant.

Participant D joined the programme intending to focus on his music career. He enjoyed the creative network he formed through the Elevate programme, and made a music video with another participant. Through the programme, he realised that music wasn't a viable main income source for him, and so he took a full-time role (which allowed him to stop receiving MSD support).

Participant E found a full-time role as a graphic designer. He said that being on the Elevate Programme helped him to see and articulate his creative value. This led him to rewrite his CV and perform better in interviews, which helped him to secure his new role.





## ARTIST EXAMPLES

Kyla believes Elevate helped her realise that her music career is a job. She particularly enjoyed the project management workshop, appreciating that it takes big dreams + ideas to help make a plan. She has also learnt that it is important to have good mental health and be resilient. She has also learnt a lot from other people and picked up valuable tips and tricks. The support of an advisor has been helpful, particularly having someone be accountable to, when sidetracked. She has released a single which is now up to 30,000+ plays on Spotify and plans to apply for NZ on Air funding to translate this song into Te Reo for another release. She is working on releasing an album at the end of the year and teaches singing on the side.

Sebastian found that after a long period of being on a benefit and not feeling passion for or confidence in his future in the arts, he is now interested in opportunities to play live music again and is motivated to look at different income streams to forge a music career. Releasing some new music and making pocket money off the royalties, as well as teaching workshops and playing live (when this is possible again) are now part of his future plans.

Sandra's biggest success through Elevate was the realisation, permission and confidence to call herself an artist after working hard in the arts for 20+ years. She sees herself as more of an arts advocate these days, supporting and promoting other artists in the Waikato. It was meeting other artists in her Elevate cohort that prompted this. She realised how much she actually knew, and what was natural, easy and logical for her wasn't necessarily for others. Now she is motivated to help others, and has collaborated with several other artists from her cohort already.

Sylvia - one of the biggest impacts that has come out of Elevate is this realisation "yes, I am an artist, I am worthy of saying this". She recognises that without Elevate and the contact with her advisor and the other Elevate participants, that she would have been isolated, working alone in her studio. She really feels connected to an arts community - for support, resources, advice, collaborations, company etc - one that she didn't have before she started Elevate. Another big impact for her is feeling like she is part of something bigger than herself, she is in an ecosystem with other artists and practitioners. Originally, when starting Elevate, she felt competitive, but the Elevate workshop that discussed ecosystems shifted her thinking entirely. She has stopped comparing herself to others, she appreciates everyone (including her own) differences, realises there is room for all of us within this ecosystem.

Caitlin feels she is ready to take the next necessary steps to get her creative career where she wants it to be, and has a fire and confidence to do so. She is ready to take on opportunities, to walk towards doing things that get her closer to her aims despite the fact they terrify her, and is motivated to get out of her comfort zone in order to make connections and move things along. For example, last year she talked of having a real fear of standing in front of people to teach them in workshops and therefore nearly didn't take the opportunity to run workshops when offered to her recently. However, this year she has seen this as an opportunity and something that aligns with her values and which can provide a much needed income. Where before she may have lacked confidence to reach outside of her comfort zone, she is now keen to make connections with stylists, and build a community of supporters. After the Elevate Tax workshop she sat down and worked out her accounts and how much she owes in tax. It's a bit, but she's happy to not have the shadow of worry in her life of knowing she's not on top of things. She had been worrying about her tax situation, but too afraid to walk towards the problem as she lacked confidence in knowing what to do. She is planning to move forward being on top of her accounts so as not to get in this situation again.



Jason has been committed to meeting his monthly targets throughout the programme and continues to set himself ambitious goals. Since arriving in NZ a little over a year ago with no contacts, he has set up a website with a shop, worked on building a social media profile and has now secured 2 galleries / retail outlets for his work. He is confident he can reach financial sustainability and come off MSD support in the next few months.

David improved his skills in putting together funding applications. He jumped from not having any experience applying for funding to securing three CCS grants in three different districts less than nine months. He was even congratulated by one of the CCS grant administrators and offered more money than what he had asked for because he had put together such a good application.

Kelsy's confidence increased and she's now running her own podcast production business. She also worked with a few clients who needed someone to produce a podcast series for them.

Meghan and Jason met each other at Elevate and made good friends. They are now thinking of working together designing lamps to sell that will combine their skills: woodworking and textiles. Both of them are very talented.

Jessica's main goal when she joined Elevate was to jump-start her career as a fine artist. Elevate has helped her to define herself as a fine artist and gave her the tools to secure a place in a couple of important exhibitions: her work was recently selected to be part of the Molly Morpeth Canaday Award 3D 2022 and an exhibition at Spilt Milk gallery in Edinburgh.

Kelly feels that Elevate has helped her to find direction within her projects. She has now set up herself to be a sole trader working on fixed term contracts as a "Creative Generalist" carrying out administrative and communication tasks. Her confidence has significantly improved and her passion for filmmaking has found a clearer direction. She aspires to be a producer.

Mariska is an incredibly disciplined artist, she has done so many things right. But due to her lack of a peer network was not getting the necessary feedback to be aware of all the good work that she has been doing. Elevate has been greatly assisted with being clear on what she is good at.

