

**Creative
Waikato
Toi Waikato**

Wellbeing and Arts, Culture and Creativity in the Waikato:

In Our Own Words

An in-depth analysis of the impact
of arts, culture and creativity, in the
words of Waikato residents

October 2022

Prepared by



**HUBER
SOCIAL**

*Rangiwaerea Taute-Taylor performing at the Matariki Day event
at Tatou Va, Tokoroa during the Matariki ki Tokoroa exhibition*



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Acknowledgement of Country

Huber Social acknowledges First Nations people as the Traditional Owners and Custodians of Country throughout Australia and their continuing connection to land, waters and community. We pay our respects to the people, the cultures and the Elders past, present and future.

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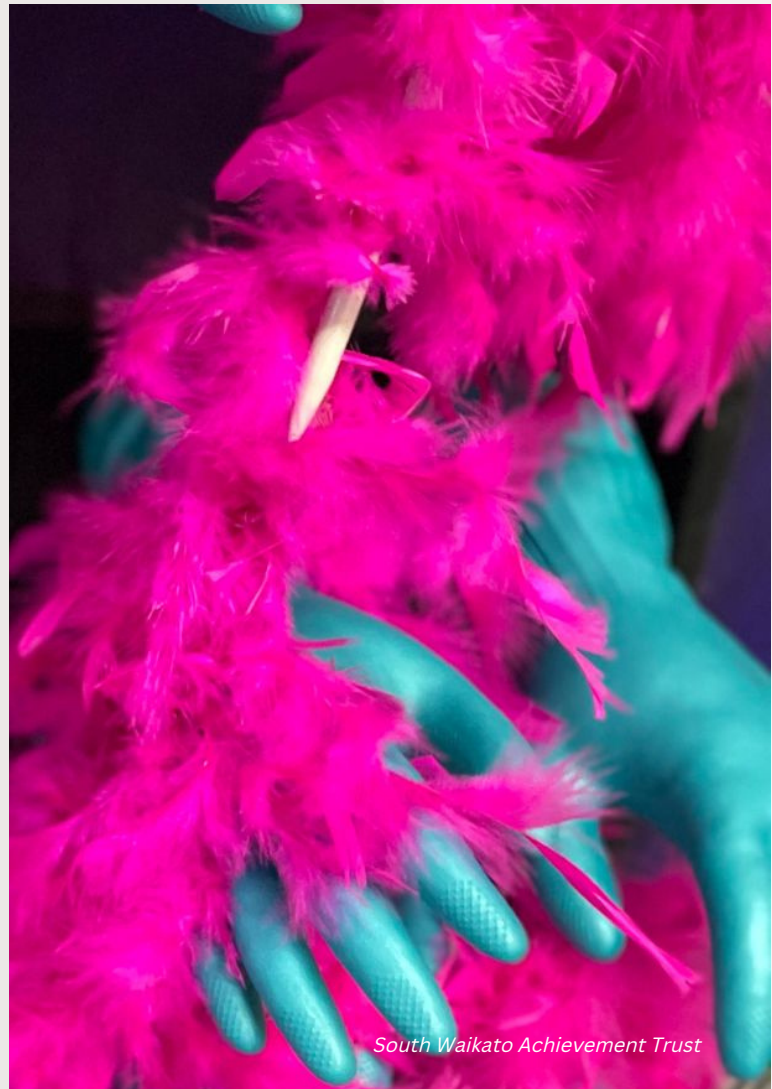
Arts, Culture and Creativity in the Words of Waikato Residents

The *Wellbeing and Arts, Culture and Creativity in the Waikato Report* demonstrates the social value of engagement with arts, culture and creativity in quantifiable terms.

However, as part of Creative Waikato's mission to understand the impact of arts, culture and creativity on the wellbeing of the Waikato community, it was recognised that a vital component of that understanding needed to be shaped by Waikato residents themselves.

In Our Own Words is an annex to the *Wellbeing and Arts, Culture and Creativity in the Waikato Report*, and presents the overarching themes surrounding arts, culture and creativity that Waikato residents shared in their open feedback on the Waikato Wellbeing Survey. It examines how residents articulate the impact that arts and culture has on their lives, as well as how the COVID-19 pandemic altered their engagement with creativity. Finally, it presents the visions that residents have for a supported creative sector that is able to meet their creative needs.

This annex uplifts residents' shared lived experiences with arts, culture and creativity and what it truly means for their own wellbeing. Directly from the Waikato community, and in their own words.



South Waikato Achievement Trust

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

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

- Waikato resident



Understanding the Impact of Arts, Culture and Creativity

About the Project

Independent measurement expert Huber Social was engaged by Creative Waikato to measure the social impact of community engagement with arts, culture and creativity in Waikato. To support the arts sector in measuring their contributions to community wellbeing, Huber Social also developed a social impact toolkit, adaptable to individual organisations' arts and cultural activities.

Measurement provides a data driven approach for Creative Waikato and other arts organisations to articulate their social impact to internal and external stakeholders, and identifies opportunities for maximising that impact by better directing their resources to meet their communities' wellbeing needs.

Measurement Activities

To measure the social impact of arts, culture and creativity, Huber Social and Creative Waikato developed and launched the Waikato Wellbeing Survey in June 2022. The self-report survey asked people to think about their overall satisfaction with life, type and frequency of engagement with arts, culture and creativity, and their own levels of capabilities and access to opportunities.

Statistical analysis provides evidence for how engagement with arts, culture and creativity benefits the lives of Waikato residents, and of all factors measured which are those most important to their overall wellbeing. These findings are discussed in detail in the full report, 'Wellbeing and Arts, Culture and Creativity in the Waikato'.

Qualitative Data Collection and Analysis

As part of the Waikato Wellbeing Survey, four open-ended questions were posed to participants. The questions asked participants to describe in their own words:

- How they engage with arts, culture and creativity
- How arts, culture and creativity impact their overall wellbeing
- What impact, if any, the COVID-19 pandemic has had on their engagement with arts, culture and creativity
- Their suggestions for improving access to and engagement with arts, culture and creativity in Waikato.

Open text responses were analysed using Word Stat 9 to identify trends in words and phrases used by participants, which are then coded to generate common themes.



Engagement with Arts, Culture and Creativity

Waikato residents were asked to share any thoughts or reflections on their personal engagement with arts, culture and creativity. Respondents used this opportunity to reflect on both the positive and negative characteristics of their experiences with arts and culture.

Key themes identified in this section include:

- The range of engagement with arts in Waikato
- The importance of engagement with arts, culture and creativity to residents
- How residents engage with arts, culture and creativity through their children and whānau
- Engagement restricted due to COVID-19.



Residents' Arts Engagement is Varied and Diverse

Following objective measures of engagement, many residents used this opportunity to discuss how they engage with arts, culture and creativity, in their own words.

Most respondents highlighted their tendency to engage with arts and culture through attendance of events rather than personal creation, which aligns with the distribution of objective engagement types; 54% of respondents state they attend an artistic, cultural or creative event at least once a month, whereas only 32% respondents create or participate in arts and culture at least once a month.

Some residents further specified which art forms they prefer to engage with the most. Fine art and craft and performing arts were those most frequently mentioned, which is also reflected in objective engagement type frequency. The largest proportion of respondents engage with both fine art and craft and performing arts (27%), whereas an equal proportion of respondents engage with only one art form or the other (15%). Visual arts and music were some of the most frequently referenced art forms.

I love orchestral concerts, opera, shows, choral concerts, some popular and jazz music.

I visit museums, art galleries etc and book shops at least once a month.

I am retired now but used to own an art gallery.

However, 17% of respondents reported engagement across all three art forms,

including cultural arts. It is worth noting that cultural arts reported the lowest levels of engagement; only 4% of respondents reported engagement with cultural arts and fine art and craft or performing arts, and no respondents engage with cultural arts alone.

Suggestions for increasing engagement with Māori arts and culture in particular are explored in greater detail on page 19.

The Significance of Engagement for Personal Wellbeing

Nearly all respondents who commented on the importance of engagement with arts, culture and creativity held a positive view of its benefits. Some think of arts, culture and creativity as an extracurricular activity which should be encouraged for happiness, while for others they are viewed more as necessities for survival and wellbeing.

I believe all the arts are good for the soul. One never sees unhappy people at a music recital etc.

I feel the arts are extremely important for the human psyche.

It's all art, it's all creative and it's all expression and healing.

Music and the arts are the soul blood of life. I couldn't live without them.



The Importance of Engagement for Children and Whānau

Many respondents highlighted their engagement with arts, culture and creativity through facilitation of others' engagement. This could be in a professional setting, such as music teachers or dance instructors; it could also be through supporting their own children and whānau.

I am a performing arts teacher specialising in music but as part of my responsibilities in the school I play, teach, direct, write and produce a range of arts based learning.

I support my son in his music lessons daily, take him to practice and rehearsals[...]

I work occasionally to support my partner and my daughters who are artists and photographers. I have done art gallery set ups, craft fair set ups, etc.

This reinforces statistical findings that for many, the ability for their children and whānau to engage with arts, culture and creativity is just as important to their overall wellbeing as their own engagement.

The Impact of COVID-19 on Engagement

At the forefront of many residents' mind was how their engagement with arts, culture and creativity has been affected by the COVID-19 pandemic.

Most respondents specifically shared examples of how the pandemic control responses, namely restrictions on creative events, had reduced their ability to engage with arts, culture and creativity. This was largely attributed to a decrease in the frequency of events held and opportunities to attend or engage with different art forms, namely musical shows, concerts, theatre, art shows, etc.

Due to COVID-19 restrictions there have been very few opportunities to enjoy live theatre, dance or music.

In the last six months it's been great to see more public events and activities but I still feel that since the COVID-19 restrictions etc., it's been tough. Creativity continues no matter what but I miss events and activities.

With COVID-19 restrictions, it has been really hard to attend or help out with any of these things [creative events].

I feel like COVID-19 has reduced my capacity to experience a wide range of arts.

Some people also mention how the restrictions have not only reduced their physical access but personal capacity or motivation for engaging with arts, culture and creativity, particularly when reflecting on pre-COVID times.

[My engagement is] very limited because of COVID-19 restrictions - I would have done more in this same time period prior to COVID-19.

I used to attend the theatre and music events much more frequently pre-COVID, and I sang in a choir, but COVID-19 has made me reticent about being in theatres etc.

Pre-COVID I would have attended many more events than I have in the past six months.

These concepts and additional dimensions of the impact of COVID-19 on arts, culture and creativity in the Waikato are explored deeper on page 13.



Impact of Arts, Culture and Creativity

Waikato residents were invited to describe the impact that arts, culture and creativity have in their own life. The descriptive themes identified across all responses reinforce the quantitative results of the main report, adding further confidence to the report findings.

Key themes identified in this section include:

- Positive impact on mental and spiritual health
- Connection with community
- Challenges faced by the industry contribute to negative health outcomes.



Waikato Arts Has a Positive Impact on Mental, Social and Spiritual Health

Mental Health

Evidence from the *Wellbeing and Arts, Culture and Creativity in the Waikato Report* demonstrates that engagement with arts, culture and creativity is a pathway for both improving holistic health outcomes as well as overall wellbeing. The more residents engage with arts, culture and creativity, the less likely they are to feel angry, anxious or unhappy, all of which are key drivers for wellbeing.

When answering the question, 'In your own words, how does your involvement in arts, creativity or culture have an impact on your life,' residents clearly articulated this relationship between arts, health and wellbeing. One of the phrases most frequently used by residents was '[arts] makes me feel happy', reinforcing the positive impact that arts, culture and creativity have on mental health outcomes. This impact was identified both types of engagement (attending and creating), as well as across various art forms.

Going to concerts and taking art lessons makes me feel happy.

It makes me feel happy when I can craft. I love being creative.

In addition to eliciting feelings of happiness, engagement with arts, culture and creativity can also be used as a means for managing and processing emotions, positive and negative. Residents cite how arts and culture can help them deal with stress, achieve balance in life, and provides the mental stimulation required to accomplish other tasks or just relax.

I am an active relaxer, and find that sewing, knitting etc help to relax me and clear my brain of the day's stresses so that I can unwind properly before going to bed.

[Arts] help me process emotions, escape daily life in a healthy way and just feel good and engaged.

[Art] gives me a nice work/life balance as I can do the things I love in my personal time.

[Art] keeps me social, gives me a mental challenge, gives me autonomy, gets me thinking, exercising, and doing stuff with my hands.

Residents living with a disability, injury or health condition articulated how engagement with arts is a powerful therapeutic tool for their mental, physical, and social wellness. Attending or creating arts can help calm the mind, create opportunities for meaningful social connection, and support positive perspectives and mindsets.

I have bipolar [disorder] so arts and crafts is my way of defragging my brain and having my thoughts focused on one thing instead of 110 things.

Drawing was a good tool to use when I was dealing with some anxiety in my life... It was a way to focus on something and engage my mind in a positive way.

Your world becomes smaller if you are old and disabled, being creative and interested in things outside your usual experience helps to make other problems more bearable.



Physical Health

In addition to the benefits that engagement with arts provides for mental health, residents also cited the impact their engagement has on their physical health. Dance, singing, playing musical instruments, and performing are all examples of artistic expression that strengthen not just the mind but the body as well.

My instrument is physically demanding so it helps me stay in shape.

[Art] is essential for good mental health and development of healthy minds, bodies and spirits. I dance for this reason and seek to share this with others too.

Spiritual Health

Many residents cited the benefits that engagement with arts, culture and creativity have for their spiritual health as well, often in conjunction with their connection to others and sense of community.

It is part of my overall emotional wellbeing, my spirituality, my connection to others and community.

It is essential for self expression and engaging with others in a spiritual way - beyond the limitations of words alone.

In te ao Māori we communicate so very much through our art, e.g. tukutuku panels that adorn our whare communicate ideas of protection, whakapapa, spirituality, etc.

The health and wellness benefits of arts, culture and creativity are as diverse as the Waikato, but the link between arts, health and wellbeing is clear. As mental wellness in particular is a priority need for all Waikato residents, increasing engagement with arts, culture and creativity - in any form - can help to strengthen both the health and wellbeing of the Waikato community.



*'Owls Don't Cry' by Red Leap Theatre Company
performed at The Meteor Theatre*



Arts are Vital to Community and Self- Identity

For many residents, engagement with arts, culture and creativity are what define themselves, their community, and humanity as a whole.

Self-Identity

When talking about self-identity, residents cite how arts, culture and creativity are key to both the development of one's self-identity as well as how they view and understand themselves - their 'sense of self'. It both underpins how individuals think and view of themselves and how in turn they express to and communicate with the world around them. Arts, culture and creativity can also inform their values system, having wide-reaching influence across all aspects of a person's life including their passions, professions and relationships.

It keeps me grounded in who I am and with my Māori identity.

They allow me to see the new world in a new way and explore my identity.

Arts, creativity and culture is very important to my sense of identity and self-worth and informs how I communicate and identify with the world around me.

It has brought me not only the closest and dearest friends in life, but has been integral in developing my sense of identity and connecting and creating a family with similar values.

Connection to Community

Residents frequently cited connection to community as a positive impact of their engagement with arts, culture and creativity.

This is not limited to connection within the creative sector, nor even connection with others in close physical proximity. Art and culture can facilitate feelings of connection across time and space; practicing traditional cultural practices may foster a sense of connection to one's ancestors and heritage, or multiple generations may engage with the same forms of creativity together. Moreover, connection to community can be achieved through many mediums, including creating, attending/viewing, and enabling.

Witnessing art performances, or seeing music live or poetry or a play, [gives me a similar feeling] but more on a community level. I feel I belong, that I have shared in a communal experience.

I have a small gallery where I'm able to share the work of many local artists and creators. This helps me feel connected to my community and adds to my sense of purpose.

I feel more connected to nature when I harvest harakeke and weave. I feel more connected to my ancestors.

Helps me to engage with a variety of people from all ages and across lifespans.

Art Defines Who We Are

Some residents were particularly passionate in their view of arts and culture as one of the defining factors of human society. In the words of one resident:

It is what makes us human and what makes life worth living.



An Absence of Arts Has Negative Consequences

While the majority of residents expressed the positive impacts that engagement with arts, culture and creativity on various facets of their life and wellbeing, some residents did highlight the potential negative effects. Largely these comments related to the current challenges the creative sector faces, including reduced access to funding, opportunities to exhibit their craft, and audience engagement. These difficulties in their professional engagement with arts, culture and creativity in turn result in negative consequences for the health and wellness, ultimately lowering their overall wellbeing.

I am building a career in the arts, this makes me feel anxious because I know that a career in the arts can be unstable and low income.

From a professional perspective, the sector is underfunded. My work in an arts based not-for-profit is demanding but with few paid hours and very low pay. The resulting stress impacts my personal wellbeing and negatively impacts my creativity at times so burnout is a very real risk for me.

It enriches my life and brings me joy, but my involvement also causes great anxiety and frustration at the limited resources and opportunities for creative expression outside of socially acceptable genres.

A few residents also expressed how the absence of regular creative engagement can have a negative effect on their wellbeing, contributing to feelings of sadness, anxiety and depression as well as reduced social connection.

Arts, culture and creativity are a vital part of the social, financial and health fabrics of Waikato community. Without sufficient access and availability, everyone suffers.





Impact of COVID-19

The COVID-19 pandemic brought far-reaching ramifications across all aspects of life in the Waikato. However, few sectors felt the consequences of COVID-19 as harshly as the creative sector. Everyone who engages with arts, culture and creativity in a public manner is still recovering from the social and financial impacts created by the pandemic response. While substantial research has been undertaken to identify and measure the immediate effects, there is still much to be learned about the long-term impacts of the pandemic and how to best address them so as to support the full recovery of the creative sector.

Waikato residents were asked to share their own personal experiences of the impact that COVID-19 has had on their engagement with arts, culture and creativity. Key themes identified in this section include:

- Reduced engagement with events and consequences for the sector
- Negative impacts on mental wellness and social outcomes
- Going digital, for better or for worse.



Lack of Access to Arts Has Largely Negative Impact on Health

Impacts on Mental and Social Health

As discussed in the previous section, residents are well aware of the negative impacts that a lack of access to arts, culture and creativity can have on wellness and wellbeing, particularly mental health.

There were multiple pathways that led to this outcome. For some, the lack of artistic and cultural events available was discouraging in its own right. For others, the inability to actively create, practice and participate in their chosen arts, culture and creativity negatively impacted their mental health. And yet for others still, the lack of social connection produced by engagement with arts, culture and creativity was what they missed the most.

The inability to attend classes and events due to lockdowns and vaccine requirements had a severe impact on my quality of life and therefore my mental health and wellbeing.

My mental health has suffered from the lack of social events - I'm very much an extrovert, and love being with people.

Although I have an amazing community around me, not being able to actively participate in cultural events, creative and the like, has taken a toll on my mental health.

It's put a halt on my interaction with other artists, it's made my physical health and mental health decline and therefore the production of my arts.

Many residents cited negative social outcomes as another result of the pandemic, namely the reduced opportunity and motivation to connect with others, particularly other creative people.

I haven't been able to attend certain events. It has affected my motivation to get out of the house at all.

It has reduced my desire to be around people physically for now, and has necessitated finding creative ways to stay connected.

It increased my reading and writing, but I miss the connection to other creative people so much.

Positive outcomes of lock down

For some residents the pandemic has offered them an opportunity to connect further with their own creativity. Residents cited having more time for themselves and their crafts, as well as new innovations created and art forms explored in times of need.

I enjoyed being in lock down and having the extra time to be creative (making things, colouring, knitting, simple tasks).

It [lock down] has enhanced my writing, composing and made me appreciate live music.

It has really amped up the creativity side of things. Thinking and trialling innovative ways to connect in.

COVID 19 offered an opportunity in my work life to pivot to more online expression. I was able to problem solve, and grow in a new area to meet the needs of my work.



Reduced Engagement with Events Has Implications for Sector

Availability and Attendance

Reduction of public engagement with arts, culture and creativity was largely due to two reasons: lack of availability of events, and lack of attendance.

Many residents explained that they have not been able to engage with arts, culture and creativity due to pandemic policies restricting the number of events being held in their community. Many of these residents cite the fact that they would have attended these events, had they been held.

COVID-19 has postponed or cancelled events that we were planning on attending.

Live concerts have stopped... So I have not had any engagement for a couple of years.

However, even when public events were held in person again, attendance at events still dwindled. This is due in part to residents not being able to attend due to existing restrictions, such as vaccine requirements, while some residents were hesitant to resume attending due to COVID-19 concerns. Some residents expressed anxiety about gathering in large crowds, either due to health concerns or changes in social comfort levels.

...As I have yet to be sick, I have been avoiding large crowds to a degree.

I have been out less and don't like being around large crowds; lockdown got me used to really just spending social time with my family and not many others.

Residents also cited their lack of ability to travel to view and consume art, culture and creativity due to pandemic restrictions.

It is important to note that for many residents, attending artistic, cultural and creative events was their predominant if not only form of engagement with arts, culture and creativity; only one-third of residents create or participate in arts, culture and creativity on a monthly basis. Perceived lack of availability of events greatly reduced engagement for these individuals, and likely has had a negative impact on their overall wellbeing.

Loss of Employment and Income

For those in the creative sector, reductions in availability of events and social restrictions has had rippling consequences with employment and financial implications. Professional creatives cited the loss of employment and income as a result of reduced activity in the sector. Heightened aversion to financial risk has also meant funders have been less likely to invest in the sector and its employees.

COVID-19 has made live performances almost impossible due to imposed restrictions. This resulted in loss of income... it has also negatively affected funding streams to provide for live performance.

Limited travel has meant I have not had people to come visit my studio to come see and purchase my work.

I'm worried that my future is limited, as there are not enough local opportunities because the creative industries continue to be undervalued by council and developers.

Lack of tourists has had a very noticeable drop in my sales. Organisations are less keen to employ people. Galleries are less keen on developing emerging artists.



Loss of Motivation and Purpose

Creative professionals also cite the loss of motivation as a major consequence of the pandemic. Artists and creatives report feeling less motivated to create and share art, largely because of the instability the sector has faced over the past few years.

The constant upheaval and unpredictability has been stressful and I have at times become apathetic about it, thought about leaving this industry or retiring early.

The feeling of losing motivation and brain declining from lack of cultural stimulation.

Some of my teen/young 20s kids just stopped doing their thing and it's been hard getting them motivated to pick it up again.

My passion of performing and creating was challenged and that created a sense of doubt in my ability and connection with something I have done for over 20 years.

For some, this absence of creative opportunities also diminished their sense of purpose. This is particularly concerning to hear, as having a strong sense of purpose is one of the most important factors to overall wellbeing for Waikato residents.

Going Digital

An unexpected outcome of the pandemic, at least at its outset, was the speed with which life shifted online, including our creative life. Residents had mixed feelings about the digital translation of engagement with arts and culture; some felt that it was innovative and life-saving, while others felt that it fell short of real-life experiences.

One major benefit has been exposure to international arts and cultural experts that I would never have been able to afford to see or learn from otherwise.

I felt the artworks online were missing something, it's impersonal. I missed...feeling the energy that comes from being in a crowd of like-minded people.

COVID-19 allowed me to experience the arts in new ways e.g. attending online workshops, viewing digital galleries and taking part in Zoom panel discussions.

The creative sector went to great lengths to maintain access to arts, culture and creativity, albeit with varying degrees of success. However, uplifting access to art and culture online provided residents with an essential service at a time of critical need, and is a true testament to the responsiveness of the Waikato creative community.



Dr Jeremy Mayall, Horomona Horo & Regan Balzer



Ways to Strengthen and Support Arts, Culture and Creativity in the Waikato

As the primary creators and consumers of arts, culture and creativity in the Waikato, it is vital that residents are provided an opportunity to share their visions for a thriving creative community.

Of the many suggestions residents had for ways to strengthen arts, culture and creativity in the Waikato, the key themes that emerged were:

- Sustained financial investment in the sector for consumers and creators
- Greater exposure of Māori art and culture
- Better communication of events and expanded reach to regional communities.



Financial Investment in the Creative Sector

Unsurprisingly, there was a unified call for greater financial investment in the Waikato creative sector. Residents expressed their frustrations in the sector's chronic underfunding; however, there was greater variability in where that funding should be prioritised.

Financial Support for Artists

Many respondents felt that there needs to be greater financial support for creative artists, particularly for new and emerging artists. This may be in the form of greater wages, more paid work opportunities, or subsidised costs for creating and sharing art.

Creativity needs to be accessible as paid work, not just as a hobby in most cases.

It would be wonderful if there were more paid opportunities around the Waikato for directors, actors etc.

Provide low-cost venues for not-for-profit arts groups; provide subsidised marketing, promotion and advertising for not-for-profit and small performance groups.

Increase in wages particularly for hospitality workers and other low wage jobs that are typical part time jobs for artists.

This last example in particular highlights the intersectionality of the creative sector; policy reform across other sectors, such as transportation, housing or employment services may be another pathway for enacting positive change in the creative sector.

Increase Low-Cost Opportunities for Engagement with Arts and Culture

Strategic investment in the sector could positively impact how non-professional residents engage with arts, culture and creativity as well, particularly for those whom are unable to participate in arts and culture due to financial barriers. Waikato residents have suggested increasing access to arts and culture beyond public works, and particularly for Māori art.

I'd like to see affordable art classes being made available to people on low incomes, to help us connect better.

Offer opportunities to learn different art forms (in particular Māori art) for low to no cost.

As a Māori I strongly feel the arts are out of reach for many of our whanau, particularly those from low to middle income socio demographics. There is a large pool of youth who are unable to experience the arts due to barriers such as affordability and accessibility.

Residents also call for financial and political decision-makers to recognise the untapped potential of a thriving creative society; not just in terms of financial profit, but for the contributions art makes to community, people and place. In the words of one resident:

There is vast untapped potential in the arts that can revitalise towns and communities, drive additional tourism revenue, create jobs and give pride and purpose to the people who live in those communities. It needs serious investment in the form of full-time paid professionals whose job is to build the arts into a serious contributor to the local economy.



Greater Elevation of Māori Art

Residents have also called for improved access to Māori art in the Waikato. This may be reflective of the fact that cultural art was the art form residents report engaging with the least in the Waikato Wellbeing Survey.

Both Māori and non-Māori residents called for both greater availability of Māori art in their community, as well as more opportunities for Māori artists to showcase their work.

[We need] more Māori art galleries, more Māori museums, more Māori art events, more Māori culture visible in our city.

Including more cultural (Māori) events and displays/opportunities. The Waikato is rich with history and these stories need to be shared.

I have found it hard to land jobs, let alone for Māori performing arts or to be paid for our work; because of this I'm forced to take opportunities [outside of] my own community.

Celebrate the taonga of the Tangata Whenua by promoting historical and modern Māori art nationally and internationally...go beyond the mono-cultural and mono-lingual.

More te ao Māori forms of art and creativity that help pakeha and tauwi engage in things Māori so our world and our knowledge are not such abstract ideas.

Not only will increased access improve local residents engagement with Māori art and culture, but it will enrich the community as a whole by reducing emigration, strengthening connection to place, and celebrating the cultural diversity of the Waikato.





Wider Event Communication and Promotion

Finally, respondents stated their intent and eagerness to engage with arts, culture and creativity in the Waikato - if only they knew about it! Many residents felt that promotion of events was uneven, particularly for local creatives and Māori and Pasifika events.

Do cultural events such as Pacifica / kapa haka events get the same level of advertising as pop concerts? I feel I need to go searching for cultural events whereas I get lots of advertising in my inbox for more 'mainstream' events.

More variation in what is promoted encouraged, support for new, underground or unrecognised art/artists that doesn't attract a commercial audience but keeps the scene evolving in fresh and interesting ways.

Promotion of what's available - e.g. Hamilton has some awesome murals, festivals, sculptures, events, the Hamilton Gardens, the museum, the new theatre - yet a lot of people have never heard of these things.

Promotion of Events in Regional Communities

Respondents in regional districts advocated for greater access to events in their own communities, citing that they are not necessarily afforded the same opportunities to engage with arts, culture and creativity as residents in big cities.

More events in smaller communities, or more advertising to smaller communities when there is something on in Hamilton.

More connection between professional artists and grass roots communities. Invest local in authentic arts experiences for all.

Promotion of Events for Youth and Families

Finally, residents also requested greater programming and promotion of youth and family-friendly events. Considerations for event timing, access and content were all mentioned as ways to increase access to arts and culture across multiple generations.

We need more activities for the whole family, especially when it comes to live music (day-time events so kids can attend).

Even just opening the libraries, museums, and creative spaces by 8am would be a huge help.

Things like Boon in the Dark, School Holiday plays/theatre performances etc. are epic to see [my kids] engage with.

Definitely support the art works for public areas...introduce people-craft type things through open days at public spaces such as garden place, the base, local parks - not just for kids but for adults of all ages.

Work with education sector to involve arts in kids learning.



I feel deeply fortunate to have had the support from the Creative Waikato community.

Their support and friendship has opened me up to new worlds of opportunity and connection.

There is clearly a strong appetite for improving the creative scene in the Waikato - but there is also deep recognition and value of all the wonderful ways and means that Waikato residents can and do engage with arts, culture and creativity in their community.

Residents are excited to see how arts and culture continue to evolve in the Waikato and discover new ways of engaging with it, both at home and in the community.



Get in Touch

**Creative
Waikato
Toi Waikato**

Creative Waikato

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



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Huber Social

info@hubersocial.com.au
www.hubersocial.com.au





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