



Toi Whītiki Sector Engagement Hui

Insights Report

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Prepared on behalf of Te Taumata Toi-a-iwi

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1. Executive Summary

Auckland Council partnered with Te Taumata Toi-a-Iwi to design and facilitate a sector engagement hui to understand the current challenges within the arts and culture sector in Tāmaki Makaurau, what might be needed to support the recovery of the sector and the role that Toi Whītiki could play. A diverse group of creative sector leaders attended the hui and openly shared their knowledge, thoughts and insights.

COVID-19 has deeply impacted the creative sector, with opposing effects - at one end an explosion of artistic activity and at the other, Māori and Moana Oceania arts are disproportionately affected and independent artists are experiencing increasing hardship. It was clear that the pandemic had amplified the existing inequities and that urgent leadership and action are needed to ensure sustainability into the future for the sector.

Despite these challenges, there is real potential to drive systems change in the sector. To achieve this, disruption is necessary to change traditional models of investment and develop new, adaptive and responsive funding models that provide greater access and equity. Alongside this, there is the need to change current perceptions and reimagine the definition, impact and influence of arts and culture in Tāmaki Makaurau and in the lives of all Aucklanders.

Building forward to create a sector that is accessible, impactful and equitable requires collective and inclusive leadership across the sector. There is a need to mandate the value of culture, creativity and arts in society and importantly, to ensure Tangata Whenua/ Māori are at the decision-making table.

The sector requires greater understanding of Toi Whītiki, its intent, relevance and place in the ecosystem. This will require Auckland Council to engage more regularly with the sector and share how the strategy is reflective of the needs and expectations of the sector and how it can contribute to the development of culture, creativity and the arts within Tāmaki Makaurau. The strengthening of the relationship between council and the sector is a critical step in building belief and understanding of the strategy.

Looking ahead, there is potential for Toi Whītiki to enable Auckland Council to lead the most exciting creative vision in Aotearoa, to embed Te Ao Māori/Te Tiriti o Waitangi outcomes within the strategy and create a platform for meaningful relationships with the creative sector.

The following insights report is reflective of the voices from the sector who attended the hui. It provides an overview of the key themes that emerged and the insights that were shared, along with suggestions for next steps.

2. Background

Toi Whītiki, Auckland’s arts and culture strategy was adopted in 2015 and has now been in implementation for five years. Over that time, Auckland has changed and developed, and the Auckland Plan 2050 has set a new direction and aspiration for the city. Most recently, COVID-19 has had a significant impact on arts and culture in Auckland.

Auckland Council is embarking on a review of Toi Whītiki, centred on understanding the current state of the creative (arts and culture) sector in Tāmaki Makaurau; the impacts of COVID-19; what is needed to support the sector to ‘build back better’; and the future role that Toi Whītiki could play in this context.

As part of this review, Auckland Council partnered with Te Taumata Toi-a-Iwi to undertake an initial sector engagement hui intended to inform its internal review of Toi Whītiki, whilst also contributing to ongoing sector conversations about the development of the regional strategic infrastructures needed to support a thriving and resilient creative sector.

3. Sector Engagement Hui

Te Taumata Toi-a-Iwi worked alongside Auckland Council’s Culture and Diversity Policy team to design and facilitate a three hour sector engagement hui, held on Thursday 11 February 2021 from 10am - 1pm at Auckland Live.

While the Culture and Diversity Policy team commissioned the hui, there was support from across the wider Auckland Council whānau, with Auckland Live providing the venue and Council /CCO staff hosting sector representatives on the day.

Invited to attend were a diverse group of key sector leaders, as identified by Te Taumata Toi-a-Iwi and Auckland Council’s Culture and Diversity Policy team. Present at the hui were 19 creative sector leaders, alongside 10 staff from the wider Auckland Council whānau (Auckland Council, Auckland Live, Auckland Unlimited and Te Taumata Toi-a-Iwi).

Using the World Cafe model of ‘conversations that matter’, participants undertook three rounds of 20 minute conversations, discussing:

1. The challenges and opportunities for arts and culture in Tāmaki Makaurau – including those arising through the impact of COVID-19.
2. The strategies, policies, infrastructures and activities that are needed to support recovery and assist the sector to ‘build back better’ after COVID-19.
3. Perceptions of Toi Whītiki – its impact, ongoing value and relevance to the sector and opportunities to strengthen/refresh.

4. Current Context

Arts and Culture is integral to the social, cultural, environmental, and economic wellbeing and vitality of our nation and recent data from Creative New Zealand shows that 79% of young New Zealanders say that doing creative things make them feel excellent or good¹. Research indicates that participation in the arts during childhood has been linked to positive educational, social and emotional outcomes later in life.

The arts contribute to our diverse identities and shared sense of national identity, with 66% of New Zealanders saying they learn about different cultures through the arts, and 72% agreeing that the arts should reflect New Zealand's cultural diversity.²

There are also positive relationships between art-going and other social and civic activities, such as volunteering in communities. Economically, the Auckland creative sector generates \$3.6 billion in GDP and employs 32,242 people.³ Increasingly, arts, culture and design are used in healthcare, manufacturing, local community and economic development initiatives.

Yet the sector's acute vulnerability during the COVID-19 global pandemic has had ongoing repercussions on Auckland's creative and cultural workers and industries. Across the spectrum of artistic and creative endeavours, restrictions on gatherings, changes in consumer behaviour (voluntary or otherwise), and severe unemployment have taken a toll on the sector.

A creative sector survey, undertaken by Te Taumata Toi-a-Iwi in November 2020 highlighted that COVID-19 continues to have widespread impacts on creative sector activity, with 58% of respondents indicating they had to cancel an event or project because of COVID-19, and a further 36% had postponed at event or project. The survey also identified that the inability to plan for the long term was being felt keenly across the sector and suggested a disproportionate impact among Māori and Moana Oceania respondents.⁴

¹ Creative New Zealand, 2020

² Creative New Zealand, 2020

³ Creative Sector Auckland 2020: Industry Snapshot and Trends - RIMU, Auckland Council (November 2020)

⁴ COVID-19: Further reflections of impact on the Creative Sector in Tāmaki Makaurau - Te Taumata Toi-a-Iwi and dovetail (November 2020)

5. Key Themes

Participants at the hui engaged openly and were generous not only with their time, but with the knowledge and insights they shared.

Within the hui participants thought deeply into what it would take to achieve a shared vision for the sector, and the following emerged as the key themes.

It's important to note that these themes are interwoven and interconnected, and need to be read and responded to as a whole system.

- **Leadership:** The need for focused, collective leadership across the sector (including practitioners, local and central government) to bring about change, inform and influence.
- **Mandate:** Central and local government to mandate the value of culture, creativity and the arts.
- **Te Ao Māori and Tangata Whenua:** Te Ao Māori worldview is at the centre of any strategy or policy and tangata whenua/Māori are at the decision-making table.
- **Knowledge:** The need to emphasise, understand and build diverse knowledge and world views that are reflective of the many communities that make up Tāmaki Makaurau.
- **Well-being:** The importance of creativity to well-being.
- **Collaboration:** The need for sector-wide collaboration, to build and strengthen relationships.
- **Artist Voice:** Artists play an integral role in the design, development and implementation of strategy. Call to position artists as advisors to central and local government to facilitate strategic priorities and outcomes.
- **Disruption:** The call for disruption of traditional funding and investment models and institutionalised perceptions of the sector.
- **Change:** The need to change how arts and culture is valued and funded
- **Activation:** The need to bring Toi Whītiki to life and to create shared ownership with the sector

It was expressed several times by participants that the hui itself was an example of Toi Whītiki coming to life and demonstrating the sector's relationship with Council. This is an ongoing relationship and the hui was the start of a conversation with the sector.

6. Deeper Insights

At This Moment

Urgent call for change

Within the current arts and culture landscape in Tāmaki Makaurau, participants observed an explosion of artistic activity and the strength of community circles, alongside new found unity and deeper connections. The impact of COVID-19, has the sector facing increased hardship; independent artists are leaving the sector for work in other industries and Māori artists are going home to their turangawaewae. Support (emotionally and financially) is urgently needed to build artists' resilience to weather these difficult times.

Systemic disparities

It was acknowledged that the pandemic has amplified what has not changed in the last 10-20 years and highlighted the inequities within the sector. Participants noted that COVID-19 has exacerbated the ongoing disparities Māori and Moana Oceania arts continue to face in the sector. The call for action requires urgent change for new adaptive and responsive funding, investment models and systems to ensure access, equality and equity. Thought leadership and action are needed now to create and develop sustainability in the sector.

Knowledge Gaps

A persistent theme throughout the hui dialogue was the knowledge gaps within the sector - What is culture? What is art? And from whose lens or worldview? Participants identified an inherent conflict in grouping "arts and culture" together and proposed culture first, then art. There was a strong call to action for sector wide decolonisation of the meaning of arts and culture, alongside the need to better understand diversity of culture and the requirement for a multi lens/worldview.

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"Say we want to understand, but not taking time to know - to really know different world views"

"Need a new 'lens' to understand cultures before we redesign the system"

"Unity of diversity and diversity in unity. Knowledge"

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What Would It Take?

While the creative sector continues to face daunting challenges, workshop participants offered innovative ways to adapt, survive and challenge systems that aren't working. Within this space, participants identified the need for further discussion and understanding as to what the definition of better is and for who it's better for, along with considering what the transition to a "better future" requires.

Focused collective leadership

Leading the call from participants was the need for focused, collective leadership across the entire ecosystem (practitioners and creators, local and central government) to inform and influence. Specifically within Auckland Council, participants identified the opportunity to provide the Mayor with an arts and culture strategy that he could champion to central government. As an example, participants offered the letter written by mayors from 10 major US cities to the Biden-Harris administration asking for an integrated federal approach to supporting the arts.⁵

Collaboration

There was a clear call for cooperation and collaboration, to build and strengthen relationships across the sector, and to understand, value and act like an ecosystem. And for a shared visibility of relationships along with the sharing of resources and knowledge to build a resilient and sustainable sector. Whilst at the same time participants identified that leadership was needed to facilitate and develop this.

Mandate value of culture, creativity and arts in policies

Alongside the need for leadership, participants called for central and local government to mandate the value of culture, creativity and the arts into all sectors of society. And for Auckland Council to embed the strategic priorities for the creative sector across the Council whānau (local boards, CCO's).

Systems change

The strategy needs actioning, investment and co-ownership from the sector and this can only happen if the sector can truly see themselves reflected in it. In order for that to occur the sector requires a disruptive approach to initiate systems change, at a funding and investment level, in the perceptions of culture, creative and arts and in the diversity of culture, communities and practice. This would empower the sector to be more accessible, impactful and equitable.

Māori worldview

Participants unanimously agreed that representation is vital. Importantly, Te Ao Māori worldview needs to be at the centre of any strategy and activation going forward, and Tangata Whenua/Māori at the decision-making table, not as consultants. It was acknowledged that western structures are prevalent throughout the sector, from how art is funded, created and presented. There is a need across the sector for decolonisation and a shift in mindset and models to enable fair and equitable opportunities for Tangata Whenua/Māori.

Advocacy fundamental to changing perceptions

Throughout the discussion participants identified that advocacy for change is critical. That a fundamental cultural shift was needed for the wider community to understand the value and impact of art, alongside the need to change the definition of arts and culture to include collective wellbeing. That the definition of arts needs to be humanistic and holistic. Alongside this, participants voiced the need to strengthen regional arts and culture networks as part of a national arts advocacy group, to influence government and advocate for the value of the arts to society.

⁵ <https://www.artforum.com/news/mayors-call-for-federal-response-to-us-arts-crisis-84944>

Artists as Advisors

Participants saw a key role for artists as advisors - to council, government and investors. And noted that that artists were integral in facilitating priorities and outcomes with an arts and culture strategy.

Empowering youth voice

Participants spoke to the increase of youth voices, the value of intergenerational knowledge sharing and the need to support the next generation of artists to bring innovative ways of thinking, learning and doing to support adaptation and change in the sector. Yet there were no youth present at this hui, suggesting a need for Auckland Council to undertake direct engagement with youth to further understand this space.

Ultimately participants saw the potential to envision a new system, address the gaps and inequities and change the definition of arts and culture.

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“True change can only be achieved collectively and in concert with other parts of the wider ecosystem”

“Time is needed to shift perceptions of value and redefine what it is to be an artist”

“Need arts seen as a vital services to humanity”

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Looking Ahead

Position of Toi Whitiki in the current and future sector landscape

Toi Whitiki was written prior to the COVID-19 global pandemic, and participants believe what the strategy was seeking to address within the arts and culture sector in Tāmaki Makaurau has now been exacerbated and amplified.

This final session in the workshop prompted more questions and discussion amongst the participants, as they sought to build their own and collective understanding of Toi Whitiki, its intent, relevance and place within the arts and culture ecosystem, especially in the current COVID-19 environment.

Key questions - How does it impact and shape the sector, the organisations and the artists? How could the sector believe in and champion Toi Whitiki?

Participants questioned...

Intention

- Is it relevant? Collectively supported? Integrated across Council? What would give it mana?
- Is it a refresh or could it be a new start? Is its intention to guide or inform?
- How can you put real disruptive actions into a strategy document?
- What would an artist designed Toi Whitiki look like?

Relevance

- Te Tiriti o Waitangi is fundamental to Toi Whitiki and needs to be at its core.
- How can we look back to inform the present and pave the way for the future?
- Does it reflect how art and culture supports wellbeing?
- Toi Whitiki needs to be more inclusive and requires disruptive and transformative actions.

Understanding

- Build belief and understanding of Toi Whitiki amongst the sector and how the sector can use it.
- How can Toi Whitiki improve society's understanding of the value of creativity?
- How can Toi Whitiki protect and grow investment in arts and culture?

Potential

Participants then articulated what they saw as the **potential** for Toi Whitiki to...

- Embed the requirement to deliver to Te Ao Māori/Te Tiriti outcomes
- Keep the sector and Council in relationship and connected
- Enable Auckland Council to lead the most exciting creative vision in Aotearoa
- Be at the heart of Council's processes
- Be a living document, regularly reviewed, adapted and accountable to the sector
- Utilise regenerative (whole of systems thinking and change) frameworks for leadership and sector transformation
- Involve the sector from the outset, and for artists and creatives to keep the strategy alive

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“How is Toi Whitiki used? Who uses it and who does it belong to?

Is it inclusive of multiple different ways of knowing, seeing and doing ‘arts and culture’?”

“Can Toi Whitiki be used as a vehicle for Council to put creativity at the heart of its own processes?”

“A cultural strategy for the city, owned and championed by us all”

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7. Suggested Next Steps

Emerging from the group kōrero and through specific requests from participants, a number of next steps surfaced and have been separated into two areas - Toi Whītiki review actions to be undertaken by Auckland Council; and actions that Te Taumata Toi-a-Iwi could lead in regards to wider sector advocacy.

1. Led by Auckland Council

- a. Actively build knowledge of Toi Whītiki within the sector, specifically as to how the strategy could be used and championed by artists and organisations (e.g. by providing case studies).
- b. Create an online platform for regular sector engagement with Toi Whītiki
- c. Establishing a Sector Knowledge Leadership Group or Sector Advisory Group (with strong Māori representation) to engage with the next steps of the review process (potentially drawn from the hui participants).
- d. Ensure that youth voices are included as part of this review process by engaging with emerging artists and makers.
- e. Share the insight report with participants, with Auckland Council whānau (including elected members as part of the Toi Whītiki current state report) and other stakeholders.

2. Led by Te Taumata Toi-a-Iwi

- a. Reconvene the group quickly to build on the engagement and connections established.
- b. Connect participants with the Ngā Toi Advocacy Network and invite to monthly hui.
- c. Undertake visible mapping of creative sector leadership within Tāmaki Makaurau
- d. Building knowledge and capability with the sector and advocating for change.