



Te Taumata  
Toi-a-Iwi

# Te Taumata Toi-a-Iwi

*Innovation in  
Arts & Culture  
in Aotearoa*

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## Innovation in Arts and Culture in Aotearoa

Innovation is a phenomenon that is both simple – the successful implementation of new ideas – and complex – the interplay of environmental factors, culture, relationships, activities and capacities that lead people to uncover new ways to do things.

Aotearoa has a unique arts and culture context. Within it, there is opportunity to bring Indigenous knowledge – Mātauranga Māori – to the forefront of how to understand and build a practice of innovation. Since the beginning of time, Māori epistemology has displayed the innovation and disruption we are also looking to achieve in arts and culture using Mātauranga Maori.

From the separation of Papatūānuku (earth) and Rangi-nui (sky) where they were joined together, and their children were born between them in darkness. The children decided to separate their parents, to allow light to come into the world. After this, the children became gods of various parts of the natural world. Through to the story of Maui: with the help of his brothers, Maui harnessed the sun to slow it down so that the days would be longer and they would have more time to find food.

Mātauranga Māori have been pushing boundaries and using innovation to make the world a better place. There are also lessons to be unearthed by the experiences of a range of institutions and agencies, internationally and in Aotearoa, dedicated to designing and delivering innovation programmes. Many of these approaches have been sector-specific (business-, environmental-, social- and science-innovation) but much of this learning can also be applied to arts and culture sector.

This series is intended as an exploration – a provocation – to start a dialogue about innovation in arts and culture in Aotearoa: it contains as many questions as insights. At the end of each article is an invitation to join the conversation by sharing your thoughts with Te Taumata Toi-a-Iwi on what resonates, what's missing, or any alternative perspectives that can enrich our understanding and action.

The series includes:

1. From the place we stand now, what is the future we want to create?
2. Innovation as renewal: how kaupapa guides us?
3. Where do we want to play, and to innovate?
4. Enablers for innovation: what is needed to step forward and create that future?
5. What does this mean for funders of innovation in the arts?

The 'we' in discussion includes all of the players in the system that support, nourish and create in arts and culture in Aotearoa – the makers, producers, administrators, advocates, funders, and policy makers, along with all of the other people that collectively shape our sector.

*“We are geared toward innovative and revolutionary thinking, and practical and sustainable solutions.”*

*- Sir Paul Reeves Hui Taumata 2005*

# 1. From the place we stand now, what is the future we want to create?

## Innovation and Disruption

Innovation is often called for and held up as a solution in challenging times. This applies not only in arts and culture but across society, business, and government. It has an implicit judgement of value. Novel is better. New is progress. What is often missed in these discussions are substantive and hard questions. What future are we trying to create? What kind of innovation is required to get us there?

In a crisis, innovation can help us to rapidly respond. It's reactive, disruptive, and motivated by necessity. During the COVID-19 crisis, the arts and culture sector has been responsive, flexible, and innovative in the face of chaotic and unpredictable conditions. Expanding digital reach, securing new funding sources, and rapidly turning around productions following lockdowns. [1] This has been innovation as survival. But, as Rosabel Tan states: "The question is not simply one of survival and recovery. It's understanding that now is the time to be bold."

There is another form of innovation that emerges from crisis. It comes when the crisis abates and all of our assumptions about how the world works are still thrown up in the air. It's an opportunity to reflect on where we have been, where we are now, and where we want to go. A chance to pause. To make considered decisions about our direction.

## Innovation is Creative Practice

Creative practice is a process of innovation. There are values within creative practice that also exist in an innovation space, for example curiosity, an understanding and empathy towards lived experience, solving creative problems through testing, being comfortable with failure, and being comfortable "being in the grey".[2] Making something – such as an artwork, a performance, a music album – requires a journey into the unknown and trusting in a process. This might begin with a feeling; a central question; a desire to make change; a story that needs sharing; a subliminal impulse; a musical note. No matter what the catalyst, artmaking does not happen in a void.

There is generally a lot of hard work that goes into the endeavour. The artist, creative practitioner, or sector leader understands that taking risks and failing is the way to push boundaries. It is the only way to create something new, that has not been proven possible before. The creative mind therefore can think laterally and strategically, as the creative practice is a constant journey.

These core innovation skills and capabilities already exist in the creative sector. The question is how to unleash this potential.



## Innovation is Indigenous

Te Taumata Toi-a-Iwi commissioned Rosabel Tan to talk to some of “our architects of imagination, map-makers to the unknown” about a vision for post-Covid ngā toi arts and culture sector in Aotearoa.

### “We Can Build a New Utopia”

sets out a bold challenge to us all to think deeper, be brave, and intentionally transform the sector. These seven actions are shown in the box.

The most fundamental of these is:

“... questioning the worldview that underpins our sector is utterly crucial to thoughtful change. These values are so often invisible, but they shape our entire world. They determine which art forms are considered more valuable, or how our limited resources are distributed, or how we even conceive of leadership and hierarchy.

“Let’s commit to understanding and embedding our many ‘ways of knowing’ in Aotearoa – and to let that shape the way we do. that shape the way we do. We’re talking about shifting our whole value system.”

## We Can Build a New Utopia

7 ways, by Rosabel Tan

1. Reimagining the post-Covid ngā toi arts and culture sector in Aotearoa
2. Examine the values we have built our sector on — are they guiding us towards the future we want?
3. Understand who we want art to serve (hint: it’s everybody) and act like it
4. Create and strengthen the pathways that unlock and sustain truly excellent work
5. Care for our people
6. Care for our environment
7. Ensure these values are reflected in the ways we measure success
8. Use that feedback to keep iterating, keep evolving

*“We’ve imported our culture, mostly from Britain. We’ve imported the funding structures, what’s considered high art. Wouldn’t it be great to let go?”*

*- Elise Sterback, outgoing Executive Director of Basement Theatre*

To do this requires a recognition of the strong history and contribution of Indigenous innovation.[3,4] There are examples of innovation in Aotearoa that collide, combine, and synthesise western processes with Mātauranga Māori and Te Ao Māori. The acknowledgment of Mana Whenua and Tangata Whenua means recognising that a Māori world-view, values and frameworks, need to be at the heart of how Aotearoa innovates towards a desired future. We can move towards a new paradigm that values both Tikanga Māori and Tikanga Pākehā practice by exploring the differences, alignment, and tensions between Indigenous and Western systems.

This model below is one of many Te Ao Māori frameworks which can help us understand the process of innovation and renewal.

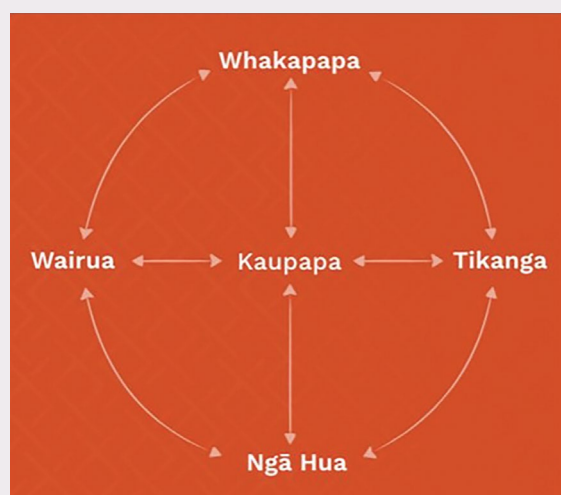
**Kaupapa** – principles and ideas which act as a base or foundation for action. kaupapa is a set of values, principles and plans which people have agreed on as a foundation for their actions. If the kaupapa is strong it will resonate with and inspire people. People with knowledge and skills will awhi – embrace and surround – the kaupapa bringing their energy and wisdom.

**Whakapapa** – Whakapapa links us with the land, the sea, the environment, our world and our universe. It helps us understand who we are and where we come from. ‘Whakapapa’ means to place in layers. To lay one upon another. The visualisation of building layer by layer upon the past towards the present, and on into the future.

**Tikanga** – when the kaupapa and Whakapapa are strong, then people with expert knowledge and skills bring their energy and hold the process and protocols that make the kaupapa actionable. These are the principles and practices that support the interpersonal relationships and ensure the work is morally and ethically grounded.

**Wairua** – when the kaupapa, Whakapapa and Tikanga are strong then the Wairua is moved. People connect to the work and to others. Hearts and minds are stirred and they are left transformed.

**Hua** – when the Wairua is moved then a contribution is made to the five Wellbeings. This includes the wellbeing of the environment, our social connections, cultural and spiritual wellbeing. It also attracts and is supported by financial resource.



Mātauranga Māori can deepen and enhance innovation and design processes in Aotearoa. This has been explored by practitioners such as [Ngā Aho](#) and Innovation Unit. These reflections show the rich potential for everyone – from government agencies to social innovators – to adopt new ways of working that value Mātaurangi Māori, show how it can be applied in practice, and how outcomes can be enhanced.

This takes time and courage because it requires us to step away from current models and practices. Instead, we need time to consider:

- *How might Mātauranga Māori frameworks lead our approach to innovation in arts and culture from now, and into the future?*
- *How might we reimagine innovation – from policy to funding to action – if we committed to this world-view and these values?*
- *What happens in our system now that unintentionally interrupts, or acts as a barrier, to the people and organisations that work in this way?*

For example, what if we approached innovation as a system-wide initiative that supports and enhances our relationships and grows interconnectedness? This could see a step away from processes that create artificial competition to ones that reward and nurture co-operation as a long-term endeavour. We might move from a mindset of scarcity to one of abundance, where Aotearoa’s contribution to the world is celebrated and strengthened.

## 2. Innovation as renewal: how kaupapa guides us

Not all innovation has equal value. Novel practice can spark imagination. It can inspire and break barriers. Equally, innovation can also be boring, but highly effective. If we shift how we organise ourselves – policy and governance – it could lead to significant transformation – the so called ‘boring revolution’[5] . Sometimes the value of innovation is not the discernible impact of an isolated project, but the skills and capacity that grows through the process of experimentation and paves the way for more meaningful action later.

*“A spark from a small vanguard  
of courageous people can light up a new pathway”[6]  
– Attributed to Jane Marsden by Chellie Spiller*

The value and importance lie not in the novelty of an idea but in what transformation is possible. What is the purpose and mission that moves us to action? Who needs to be involved, and what impact will this have if it's successful? This can be viewed in several ways:

**Purpose:** Motives for innovation range from the functional (such as organisational productivity or income diversification), to the strategic (such as new collaborations or partnerships), to the purely exploratory and inspirational. Clarity and shared understanding are important.

**Spatial:** What is the scale of the transformation possible? How far will the ripple effects spread? Will it transform the creatives involved, the artform more broadly, the

organisation, or the local or regional context? Will it change the very conditions in which arts and culture thrives in Aotearoa?[7] What action do we need to take now to make that ambition possible?

**Temporal:** How lasting will the effect be? Beyond projects and events, how will the people, organisations, culture, and landscape be changed over time? Will it have a lasting impact and will the change be sustained? The environment of arts and culture in Aotearoa has evolved to incentivise and limit us to short-term projects. How might our relationship to our work change if we think intergenerationally? How would our understanding of the process and purpose of innovation change?

## New, from where we stand

Innovation is the word of the moment, but neither the word nor concept is new. It dates to sixteenth century England and originally meant change and renewal. Later, it was adopted by economists to mean the introduction of new products and process as the basis for competition. The original meaning is more aligned with Te Ao Māori. In this interpretation ‘newness’ considers what has gone before, and what could change for the future.

*One of the richest sources of innovation is unlikely new combinations, interpretations or applications of existing knowledge – part of the continual change and renewal within culture and organisations.*

For example, Foundation North’s Gulf Innovation Fund (G.I.F.T) invites ideas that use traditional knowledge in new ways, a value of Mātauranga Māori alongside Western Science, to restore the mauri of Tikapa Moana and Te Moananui ā Toi.

## An idea, or a pathway to something new?

Much of the talk and activity in innovation concentrates on the ‘idea’ or project and seeks novelty and quick results. But there is a lot of invisible work that happens before a quality idea emerges. People need time to observe how things work, and how they don’t. Innovative teams are motivated through a shared frustration about how things are and co-create a vision for how they could be. Innovators embark on research and conversations to explore emergent ideas. They commit their creative energy. They ruminate, critique, and improve.

Innovators also build new bridges within and between sectors. They can bring in new collaborators that align around a purpose. They can create unlikely combinations and uncover possibilities.

All of this is unseen work. Most of it is unfunded. It is often rushed.

The generation of quality ideas rarely happens in the linear and time-pressured process of grant proposal writing.

There are innovation teams that spend a large proportion of their time in this space, exploring problems, co-designing ideas and possible solutions, and carrying out early tests to eliminate ideas without merit.

To judge the idea in isolation misses the talent, time, process, and care that is needed to generate good ideas. This can also disadvantage teams that can’t make this investment because time was tight, resource short, and just surviving doesn’t leave overhead for higher level thinking, and unfunded action.

## A note to funders:

Consider funding the exploration phase for people that have shown talent for innovating in the past or show characteristics that indicate they can innovate in the future. Rather than funding discrete ideas, invest in people to embark on an innovation journey; to establish the kaupapa for the work; and to build deep collaborative relationships. This kind of investment can create strong foundations for sustained innovation. This may be part of a participatory activity with others, or self-directed by creatives who then explore potential partnerships and relationships on their own terms.

Careful consideration for creative autonomy and IP protection is needed.

### Moon shots and puddle jumps

Innovation varies by scale and ambition. Is it a moon shot or a puddle jump?[8]

Moon shots are radical, bold moves that can be high-risk and hold the potential for transformational impact if they are successful. The aim is nothing less than to create something that has not existed before, something that takes us closer to a desired imagined future. It is transformational.

Puddle jumps are incremental advances that can support and strengthen the arts and culture sector in Aotearoa. They are about optimising, improving, and evolving current practice.

Whether the proposed innovation is a moon shot or a puddle jump may not impact on the scale of the first phase of experimentation. Not all transformational innovation is big and expensive and results in a grand success or failure. Small experiments are possible, even when the aim is transformation. The most challenging part is to design an experiment that will give a meaningful indication about whether it could be feasible (it can be done), desirable (people want it), and viable (it can be commercial or funded) at the scale that is intended.

### The birds-eye-view of a funder

When funders invite applications for innovation in arts and culture they get a bird-eye-view of the landscape. This is a view not available to many. If people are submitting bids for similar incremental innovations, but

view them as radical, it indicates fragmentation across the sector; that connections, communication and learning needs to be enhanced. The funder can then play a part here in recognising patterns, sharing an overview, and making direct connections between people that are innovating in the same space. This should come with incentives to collaborate or share learning in a way that respects and protects artistic IP.

This is particularly important to consider when inviting proposals for innovation from across the country. Networks in urban centres may have greater exposure to national and international innovation than their regional counterparts, simply because of the density of activity, frequency of exposure to others' work, and geography.

It's vital that funders don't perpetuate inequity by considering 'newness' only at the national scale. To mitigate this, they should consider taking a role in facilitating or funding bridges between urban centres and regional clusters to ensure that next practice and innovation spreads throughout Aotearoa.

### The unlikely suspects

Moon shots are not the reserve of larger organisations with the capacity and resources to take bigger risks or attract well-resourced partners. There is some evidence that larger organisations actually programme fewer innovative works than smaller ones. In more normal times these larger organisations have the advantage of stability and resource, while smaller organisations can have greater agility and experience less inertia.[9] However, the disruption caused by COVID-19 has shown that arts and



culture organisations experience vulnerabilities, no matter the size of the organisation.

Often innovation that disrupts the status quo comes from people and places at the edges. Places where established practice, values, and models are not so ingrained. At the edges, networks extend beyond the usual suspects. Connection and co-creation are possible with people that have diverse experiences, talents, and knowledge. Entirely new ideas can come from unexpected combinations of people and ideas.

### Plans are a best guess

Once one or more ideas have been identified a lot of work goes into experimenting, learning and iterating to evolve an idea from the original proposal into a workable effective new innovation. An idea is nothing without implementation.

This journey can take people to a radically different place from where they started. It's an exciting, uncomfortable, and necessary process to see if an idea has merit. If an idea doesn't evolve during implementation it could indicate that the idea wasn't especially radical: the path was clear, the assumptions were all correct. Or it could be the team didn't sense and respond to the incremental learning that comes with experimentation. It can be tempting to faithfully execute a plan instead of learning from iteration in that messy way that is inherent in the innovation process.

### Risk or potential?

Trying new things is inherently risky. The role of administrators, leaders, and managers is to accept risk without killing creativity.

This requires a strong kaupapa, commitment of resource, and the freedom to execute, experiment and adapt. It's also possible to take a portfolio approach which include incremental innovation projects alongside bigger endeavours.

The likelihood of success isn't solely about ambition or risk in a project, but about how many enabling factors are in place. How well placed are this group of people, at this time, to make this happen?

It's also important to consider the transformation that is possible if the project is successful. A focus on potential, with an informed optimism, presents a better chance of success than a focus on risk of failure and potential downsides. A focus on risk alone will limit potential before it's even begun. It's also worth considering the alternative, what's the risk if we don't innovate?

There is also potential in 'productive failure'. This is failure that provides sufficient learning to move the endeavour closer to achieving the outcomes. It does not maximise performance in the short-term but maximises learning in the long-term.

Adapt, rather than adopt, innovation methods

NESTA has supported R&D in the Arts to enable early-stage prototyping with some success. Through experimentation they also discovered that some commercial models of innovation support cannot be simply transferred to the arts and culture sector[10].

Practices, such as dragon's den pitching and accelerator programmes, are designed for the context and values of the commercial world. Competition;

a paternalistic relationship with investors; and economic potential as priority, are all inherent in these models. Careful consideration needs to be given to how well these practices serve an arts and culture kaupapa and how they can be adapted to reflect and promote these values – taking and adapting only those practices that work within the context.

### How do we understand ‘performance’?

Measuring success in innovation in arts and culture is more than the metrics of audience members, income generation and alternative income streams. These metrics can be reassuring but can offer a false sense of simplicity as the reality is complex. Many traditional evaluation methods, including most performance measurements, inhibit rather than support actual innovation. [11]

Chellie Spiller sees *“a pervasive need to reassure ourselves that we are on track – that if we knock off those KPIs and indicators and stick with the plan, on-time and on-budget, that we are on track for meeting our goal.”* She challenges this singular focus on certainty, and whether it is really dealing with reality. Innovation is messy, hard to navigate, and will often require a change of direction.

This requires us to ‘embrace the unknown’, ‘find opportunity in adversity’, to tune in and make sense of the complexity rather than to ignore it. Numbers can tell us very little about the journey, how well we navigated, and whether the kaupapa was fulfilled.

A core capacity in innovation is evaluating ideas and learning by doing. That includes sensing and making sense of what is happening

and its ripple effects. This is used to understand and adjust direction in real-time. The innovation process and the evaluation merge.

Chantelle Whaiapu illustrates this beautifully with the story of navigators on the sea that took time to lie down in the hull of the waka to listen to the sound of the water as it lapped the sides. The sounds gave them signals about the direction of the waka, and they used their knowledge to maintain or to adjust their direction.

There should be a Focus on Learning and the Degree of Innovation, rather than ‘Successes’. Evaluations of innovative projects and programmes should identify the extent to which there has been any attempt to learn from ‘failures’ (as well as from ‘successes’); to identify implications for the future; and the extent to which action has been taken based upon what has been learned.

### A note about time

Major innovations rarely can be developed or properly assessed in the short term. Certainly three months or twelve months (the most common timeframe) is much too soon to evaluate the impact of most innovative activities.

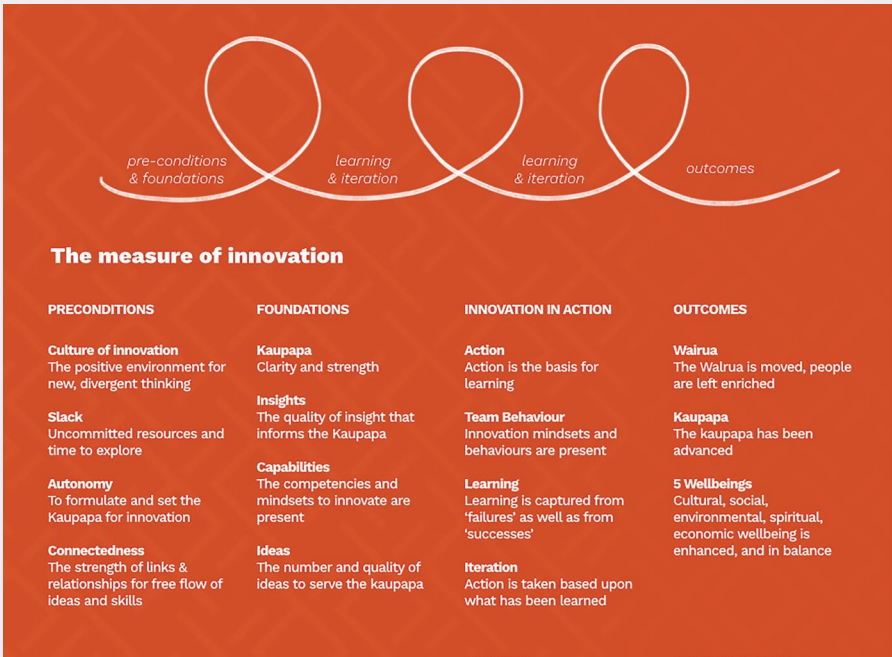
For example, frequently there is a tendency to evaluate the impact of pilot or demonstration projects before they have had a chance to get established and to work through the inevitable problems. Iteration is needed to learn and develop any initiative. Iteration is the repetition of the ‘design – build – test’ process to generate a ‘better’ solution. Each iteration should bring the team closer to the desired outcome. For example, digital products are rarely finished but are continuously developed.

Evaluation of NESTA’s work in the UK funding and supporting R&D and the Arts has shown that, while it was relatively easy to see the immediate impact of funding on the activities by grant recipients, the outcomes are not likely to happen in the short-term.[12] It can take ‘significant time’ for prototypes to be generated or new products, processes or service introduced to the market. Changes in the organisation, innovation culture and behaviour, and the sustainability of initiatives will take even more time.

How might we measure innovation?

It might be helpful to reimagine how we understand and evaluate innovation. Income alone will not tell us how we are travelling. Below is one model for how the process, as well as the outcomes, can be measured; a move away from easy to measure, but less meaningful, metrics that encourage a success, or failure, mentality.

These measures will be considered in more context as The Future Emerging series continues. It will explore in more detail the enablers for innovation in the team or organisation, as well as in the environment in which they innovate.



In this essay we’ve considered the value of innovation and considered what it is, and how it happens. This discussion is often overlooked in favour of chasing innovation as ‘novelty’ or a ‘quick fix’. We advocate that any innovation requires a strong Kaupapa to ensure that the value and importance in innovation lies not the novelty of an idea but in what transformation is possible.

### 3. Where do we want to play, and to innovate?

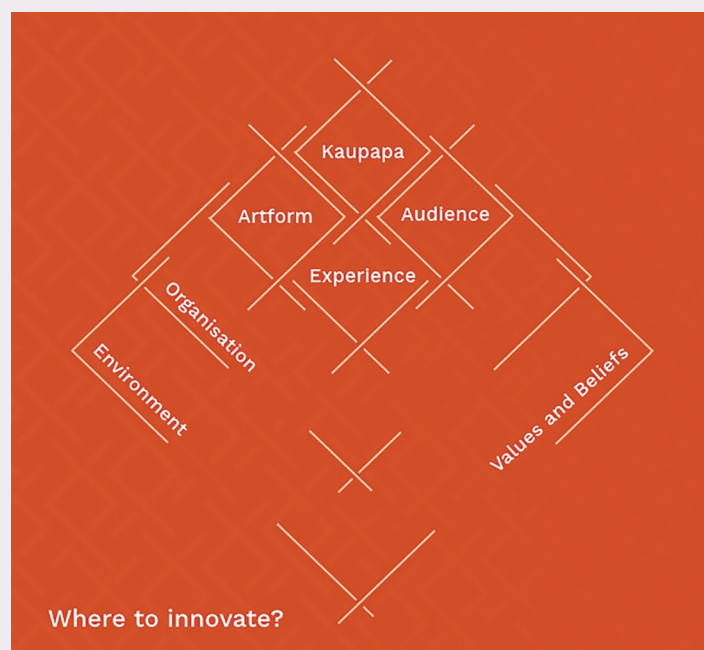
Creatives employ a constant flow of creation and exploration. A natural process of innovation. They also exist in a system. An ecology. A complex interaction of people, organisations, artistic forms, relationships, resources and knowledge flows.

When looking to innovation as a source of potential for transformation in the arts and culture sector all parts of the ecology should be considered, and involved. Importantly, this includes the values and beliefs which inform our actions, and interactions. What values are upheld? Where does power reside? These are the most fundamental and potentially transformational, but arguably hardest to change.

This article explores the spaces of potential for innovation. It offers questions to stimulate thinking as a stepping-off point for a journey into innovation.

The model below shows the interconnection between different elements of the arts and culture creation. The kaupapa guides decisions about the artform or artifact, the audience and their experience. They are intertwined and influence each other.

They are also part of a wider whole. The way that creators, producers, administrators and managers are organised, and the environment in which they work, is what makes bold things possible. At each level the values and beliefs inform each and every decision and action, whether they are explicit or remain unsaid.



*... the worldview that underpins our sector is utterly crucial to thoughtful change. These values are so often invisible, but they shape our entire world. They determine which art forms are considered more valuable, for example, or how our limited resources are distributed, or how we even conceive of leadership and hierarchy.*

*– Rosabel Tan*



## Kaupapa

A strong kaupapa is the most important foundation for innovation – without it there is no benchmark for whether innovation has brought us closer, or further away, from our intent. In the first essay in the series *The Future Emerging* we introduced this within a Mātauranga Māori framework. It has very real and practical implications.

For example, an organisation may consider the purpose of innovation to be increased income. The underlying motivation being to increase organisational stability and stop the chase for fragmented project funding; ultimately to free up creative resource to make more independent work sustainably.

In this case, new commercial activity may actually take the organisation further away from its purpose. New venture creation can reduce organisational stability. Introducing new projects can stretch capacity and distract from, rather than amplify, the current work of the organisation or practitioner. Innovation ‘funds’ with time bound entry points can have the impact of increasing this stretch where it stimulates additional work that has not been considered and designed to carefully align to purpose.

In this example, ‘greater income generation’ is the wrong expression of the kaupapa. Rather, they seek greater stable resource for independent creative expression. This reframing can unlock alternative ways to look at the problem and the source of possible solutions. For instance, how might we reduce the administrative and

production burden on creatives? How might we fund shared resources across the sector to reduce replication of administrative functions? The solutions here may lay in systems change instead of product or service innovation.

This shows the importance of defining the real problem to be solved before exploring the landscape of possible solutions. Done well, it can be the catalyst to bring in diverse perspectives and skills through new partnerships. It’s an activity that needs to be given time and supported.

## Artform

Artform development is perhaps the most highly recognisable and intuitive form of innovation by creatives. It includes exploration and ingenuity in content, form, and quality of artistic expression. It can include innovation that combines different artforms (interdisciplinarity) or the interaction with the audience during the performance (interactivity).

Funding for the artwork itself is reasonably commonplace, however it is important to consider what conditions are needed to enable greater speed, and quality, of artistic development. What acts as a barrier now? For example, there is often a need to bring in multiple funders for an artistic endeavour by design – such as co-funding requirement. But this presents challenges for creatives. To convince multiple funders of artistic merit can be a challenge. The criteria, and evaluation, vary. And without alignment between these funds, the ambition for innovation in artwork can be compromised.

## Exploratory questions

- What conditions are needed to enable greater speed, and quality, of artistic development?
- What are the barriers now?
- How should decisions about artistic development be made, and by whom?

## Audience

Audience Innovation is a part of a broader discussion about inclusion in arts and culture. It is a vital conversation about who art is made by and for. It is beyond the scope of this article to do the topic justice.

However, it is useful to acknowledge that in some circumstances there is a tension between the goal of audience diversification and financial sustainability. As Rosabel Tan says:

*“The easiest trap we fall into is privileging audiences who have more disposable income. That’s how we survive. But it’s also how we become a reflection, rather than a rejection, of society’s inequalities.”*

*“The day has come when it’s not acceptable for people to claim to be making art for a national audience if they’re just looking out the window and not thinking about the whole country.”*

– Paula Morris (Ngāti Wai, Ngāti Manuhiri, Ngāti Whātua).

If new audiences are a priority, how will you innovate with them? It is essential to get close. To move past a transactional relationship. What are their experiences of, and relationship with, the arts? Do they see themselves, their stories, reflected? How can we design experiences that engage them in a way that fits their lives, motivations and aspirations?

This applies equally to communities of practices that don’t directly interact with a public audience. These following questions can be as useful to those whose ‘audiences’ are other organisations or practitioners in the sector.

## Exploratory questions

- How well do we understand our audience/s?
- Who are they and why do/did they come to us?
- Who is not in the room that is essential to our kaupapa?
- Which audiences are a priority for us?
- How will we explore the potential of new audiences?

## Audience Experience

Experience can be thought of as the culmination of all the interactions that an audience member has with an organisation. It extends beyond the interaction with the artform to the interaction with the organisation before, during and after the engagement. This can be fleeting, or enduring.

Innovation here creates new knowledge about how audiences encounter, value and experience quality in the arts[13].

Experiments should be aligned to the kaupapa with a specific audience or group of audiences in mind. Getting close to, understanding, and empathising with audience members can provide new insight about what is important to them, and how to engage them. Innovations may be narrow, such as new marketing channels, or more substantive such as co-created performances, radically different venues, and experiments in the product, membership and service offer. Innovators need to sense what is coming next and how other sectors are evolving.

*“Why should people think we are relevant in their lives? It’s not just about attracting people to come into our theatres, it’s about what kinds of sustainable relationships we want to have with them. They are part of our society, they are part of our city.” — Kee Hong Low, Director of Programs (Theatre) at West Kowloon Cultural District Hong Kong*

## Exploratory questions

- What is the quality of our relationship with our audiences?
- How might we re-imagine this relationship and the experience?
- How might we use human-centred and co-design practices to better understand audience motives, hopes and preferences to engage them better[3]?
- What practices are other sectors trialling that may be adapted or combined?
- What do emerging technologies make possible?

## Organisation

The way we organise can have a significant impact on the outcomes of the work. It comes from challenging the underlying assumptions about how an organisation works and the culture we create. Significant changes can happen by innovating at the level of leadership and governance because it can cause a ripple effect. It can influence the values, culture, direction, and decision-making within organisations, whether they are formal or informal. How might new perspectives and thinking be brought in, and empowered, in this context? For example, decolonising practices.

Value is created through networks, collaborations, income and profit generation, management and operations.

These are influenced by how the organisation is lead, and by whom. Indeed, innovation culture itself is a factor of this leadership. Each of these areas hold rich potential for innovation.

One of the other significant opportunities for transformation is business models. How income and profit are generated will have a significant impact on whether the organisation is free to authentically follow its kaupapa and what compromises are needed to satisfy commercial or funding imperatives. Different models require different capacities and compromises. What is optimal for an organisation will depend on its context and kaupapa.

Business model innovation is hard work, and requires disciplined identification of opportunities, small tests, learning and iteration. This is a continuous endeavour, not a one-off activity. It takes strategy and evaluation that address big questions about optimal scale for sustainability, the blend of commercial, public, and philanthropic customers, and whether partnerships and mergers should all be considered.

*“This is a time for reworking our funding models and how we think about revenue streams.”*

— Cat Ruka, Artistic Director of Tempo Dance Festival

## Exploratory questions

- How might we radically change our leadership and governance to better serve our kaupapa?
- How can we authentically diversify the people and perspectives around the leadership table, and empower and resource these voices to shape direction?
- How might we curate and strengthen our networks, connections, and relationships within, and between sectors?
- What practices, operations and systems are not serving us well? How might we reinvent them? What business model innovations are other sectors trialling that may be adapted or combined?
- How will we invest in, and build our capacity for, innovation for greater organisational resilience?

## Environment

Perhaps least considered, but with great potential, is innovation in the environment. It can have the greatest transformative effect on the health and wellbeing of the people and organisations in the creative sector, and subsequently the outcomes they deliver for the cultural, social, and economic wellbeing of Aotearoa.

Investment in innovative projects helps individual organisations or collaboratives to make strides.



Investment in action for a more enabling environment for innovation can benefit all organisations, and lead to greater innovation, resilience, and sustainability in the sector as a whole.

The environmental factors that impact the sector include national and regional strategy and policy; funding flows; explicit and implicit incentives (e.g., competition, criticism and external perceptions of failure); networks and advocacy; learning and flow of knowledge; the wider arts ecology (e.g. critics, educators, the public programmers, marketers); and infrastructure such as assets, international festival and prizes that connect and celebrate Aotearoa's unique arts offerings.

Innovation in the environment can have significant downstream effects. While there remains a high degree of uncertainty about when and how a 'new normal' will emerge in Aotearoa, experimentation now could pave the way for more significant shifts as this new reality sets in, i.e. co-design of policy for innovation or collaboration by funders to experiment with new ways to manage or distribute arts and culture funding.

By recognising their place in the system, agencies and funders can unlock potential to innovation with the sector. By adopting the same innovative and agile methods these agencies and funders can build stronger, more dynamic relationships with the sector, and respond more readily to their needs as they innovate forward.

### Exploratory questions

- How might we radically change the arts and culture environment in Aotearoa to enable more innovation, sustainability and resilience?
- How might agencies, funders and other stakeholders innovate with creatives?
- How might we build stronger relationships, feedback loops, and responses when barriers to innovation are encountered.

*“We need to, as a sector, figure out how we align with each other and where we sit in relation to each other, where we are similar, where we are different. Often our sector is pitted against each other in competitive funding models, which doesn't encourage us to share knowledge and resources... this is not a pathway to healthy organisations.”*  
— Jo Randerson, writer and Artistic Director of Barbarian Productions

## 4. Enablers for Innovation

### What is needed to innovate well together?

#### Innovation projects cannot plug systemic problems

Innovation funding and activity needs to sit alongside sustained support and investment for healthy people and organisations. It cannot plug systemic problems in the sector.

It cannot be done effectively when the people that make up the arts and culture sector are stressed and in positions of vulnerability. The average creative earns \$15,000 from creative work and supplements their income with other employment outside of the sector[14]. There needs to be a long-term strategy for innovation. One that supports a shift from innovation as a 'fix' for scarcity, to one of long-term sector transformation.

*“We need to look beyond quick fixes. Funding reserves have been used up, and people and organisations that make up the arts sector are highly vulnerable...What is needed is sustained support.”*

– Art Fund Director Jenny Waldman

#### A collaborative endeavour

Long-term transformation cannot be the responsibility of creatives alone. Arts and culture agencies, institutions, and ecosystem organisations need to actively participate in this innovation, working in partnership. It is not possible for creatives to shift the sector dynamics, such as resource scarcity and competition. It needs

partners that will work alongside and support the kaupapa.

Innovation is a team game that needs to be approached with humility. It is uncomfortable. It requires trust in, and respect of, people and process. It holds a mirror up to our assumptions, differences, and egos – and can cause tensions. These are all feelings and practices that are familiar to creatives. It will take other players in the ecology to join them in this vulnerable, creative place.

#### Practice inclusion and embrace creative collision

Let's be intentional about who is in the room when decisions are being made. Who is there? Who is missing? Diversity of experience, culture and perspective can ignite new possibilities. It can also ignite creative tension. A commitment to diversity and inclusion invites challenge, welcome it. It needs to be accepted, and knowingly and intentionally, worked with for a better outcome.

#### Create a supportive climate

We need greater empathy and support for others who take risks and innovate. A competitive climate, fuelled by competitive funding, can lead to harsh judgement for those that carve a new path. Are we creating a positive culture of innovation across Aotearoa where risks are celebrated, where failure is not only acceptable but is valued as a necessary part of sector progress?

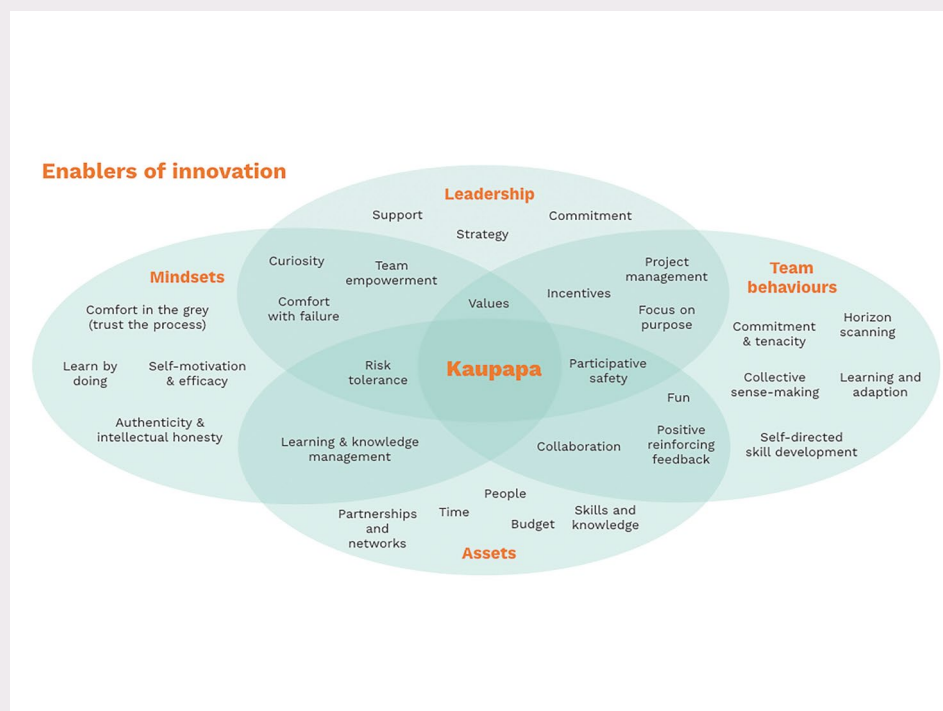
We need to be conscious about slowing down to go faster. If funding and policy design is rushed it can lean towards the safe and the status quo. Established thinking and practice are rolled out without questioning assumptions and breaking norms. Being daring is hard work and it needs space.

How can we nurture and grow clusters of innovation in arts and culture in Aotearoa? We have discussed innovation as a sector-wide endeavour. How might we accelerate the development of new industries and new ways of doing art and business through intensive interactions; sharing talent, resource, and facilities; and the development and exchange of new learning and practice?

Any innovation programme or fund should consider how to strengthen these enabling factors in teams, organisations, collaboratives, networks and in the environment. The more enabling the environment the greater the capacity of the sector to innovate in the long-term. Below we briefly present these factors. It is an area rich for exploration.

### Enabling innovation, how we organise

Organisations that generate successful innovations repeatedly share characteristics, although this may be a journey, rather than a destination:



### Strong kaupapa and commitment by leadership

A commitment to the purpose and process of innovation by leaders and managers is key. Where there is a layer of management in an organisation it needs to be 'hands-off' and to give the team the freedom to execute, test and learn. Autonomy around the process fosters creativity because it strengthens the sense of ownership over a project or a situation.

This is less of a concern when creatives are effectively also acting as leaders and managers in addition to creating. Although it may be burdensome to carry out multiple functions, it does give freedom of direction.

Where there is a layer of management, the most effective managers act in support and service to the team, rather than seniority. These leaders take time to listen, to share the mindset of curiosity, rather than exert control. It's a form of qualitative management that gives space and time for results to emerge. As discussed before, classic performance measures can act as a break, rather than enable, innovation.

The risks associated with the endeavour need to be acknowledged and accepted. 'Moon shots' and 'puddle jumps' have a different quantum of risk, and there is no wisdom in chasing large steps forward with little appetite for risk.

In any endeavour the appetite for risk should be openly discussed including reputational, financial, or operational. Creators without organisational structure or management hold all of the risk and the consequences for failure. Innovators need to know they have firm foundation; to know that support will come from their funding or organisation (if they have one) if their experiment doesn't see immediate results. This means celebrating brave action, even if learning and capacity development are primary outcomes, rather than 'results'.

If only successful endeavours are celebrated, the implicit message is that 'failure' should be brushed

under the carpet or to be avoided. Let's tell stories of people that dared, took risks, influenced, learned and grew in their innovative endeavours. Let's discuss and celebrate innovation and 'productive failure', and the value it has beyond metrics.

How does your organisation respond to new ideas? How does it define and react to failure? How could we support, and celebrate more healthy risk taking?

## Assets

There is a romantic notion that starving artists are a source of creativity. However, the research is clear. Organisations that can consistently innovate have 'slack'[15]. 'Slack' means more resource than is needed to carry out the basic functions of the organisation. It is a cushion of actual or potential resources – time, people, money – which allow an organisation to adapt successfully in response to internal or external drivers for change.

It is important because it gives space for scanning horizons for new opportunities, generating new ideas, setting up exploratory projects, and changing direction during innovation projects. Without this slack, there is no room to dream or create beyond necessity. Slack needs to be provided continuously over the organisation's life cycle, including future expectations, to be the source for continuous innovation.

## Mindsets

Mindsets are key to driving a culture of innovation. They need to be nurtured and shared across leadership, and throughout the



team. The first is that being ‘in the grey’ is not something to be fought against or to be resolved quickly. [Innovate Change](#) said being in the grey ‘means we try to feel at ease with ambiguity and uncertainty so that we are open to new ideas.’ Its important not to reach for immediate answers and to let new things to emerge.

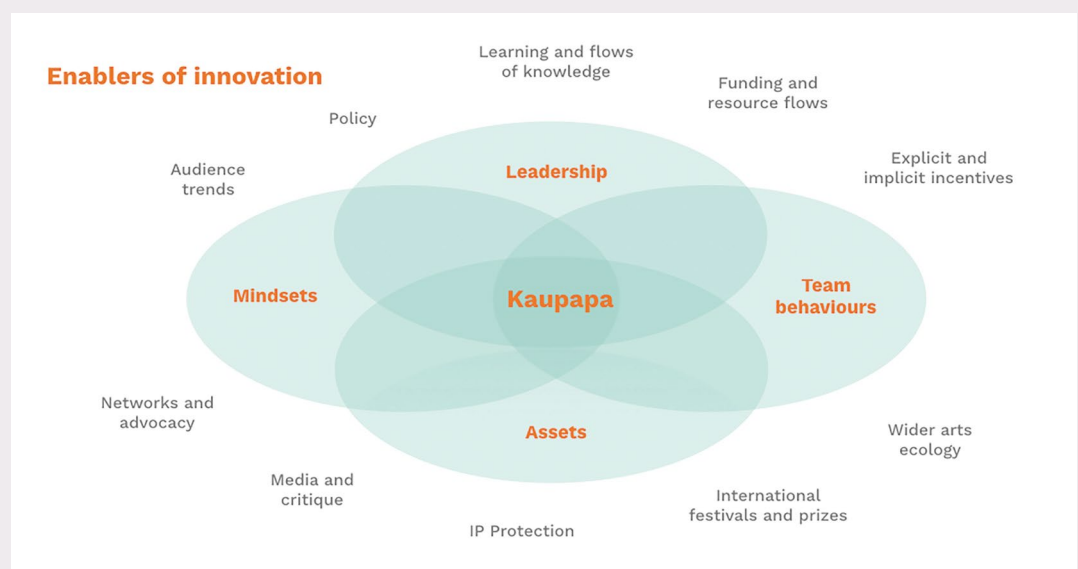
Curiosity and a love of discovery helps us to make sense of new information, and to take steps when the outcome is unknown. A bias towards disciplined action helps to stay out of ‘analysis paralysis’ and ensures that we are learning directly from life, as opposed to theorising and supposition.

### Supportive team behaviours

Innovation is a team activity and the behaviours of team members can enable or disable successful innovation. Positive, reinforcing feedback in the team can keep motivation high through challenges, and ensure that mindsets are strengthened. Shared kaupapa and tasks need to take precedence above personal motivations and drivers to keeps the team focused and moving forward. Self-directed learning and skills development ensures team capability and growth mindset are developed.

Collaborative behaviours, sound project management and task discipline all contribute to a build, test, learn cycle that moves the project forward.

### Enabling innovation, in our environment



The ‘[boring revolution](#)’ is a concept that shifts the focus of innovation investment from start-ups and projects, to more fundamental and lasting change by innovating at the level of regulation, institutions and governance. In the context of arts and culture, this would include experimentation in the relationships between creatives and institutions to remove barriers and enable more innovation. What could accelerate a move to a sustainable, resilient and thriving sector in the infrastructure (physical and non-physical, such as knowledge) and the interconnection and dependency between us (such as policy, networks, funding)? This lens is more attuned to Te Ao

Māori, where relationships and interdependencies are vital.

How our environment is organised is organic. There are intended and unintended consequences as a result. There is significant potential in discussing and taking action to improve the health and vitality of the ecology. For instance, what are people and organisations in arts and culture really incentivised for? How does competitive funding affect trust in networks? A more enabling environment requires both long term strategy and a culture of experimentation. Stakeholders in the system need to build, test, learn just as the creatives do. It needs careful sensing of the cause-and-effect of changes in the environment. This needs to come through relationships and feedback throughout the system.

Thinking strategically about innovation systems at a regional or national scale is well established in technology and business sectors. Change can be understood and viewed over time by [mapping the ecosystem of entrepreneurship in a city.](#)

How might we learn and adapt from the concept of Innovation clusters for the arts and culture sector? How might we develop the conditions where innovation across the sector is the norm, where there is long-term capacity or 'slack' to innovate, and that there are strong connections and networks that stimulate new potential? What if this was a ten to thirty year endeavour? What steps would we take now?

We need to think longer term about what people, organisations and the sector as a whole needs to develop the capacity to innovate into the future.

## 5. What does it mean for funders of innovation in arts and culture?

There are six provocations to funders in how they support innovation.

1. Innovate with the sector
2. Value and embrace Mātauranga Māori
3. Invest for the future
4. Embrace the boring revolution
5. Do the hard work of coordinating, so creatives don't have to
6. Give degrees of freedom

### 1. Innovate with the sector

Funders are a vital part of the system. The values, behaviours and actions of funders have intended and unintended consequences for the sector's ability to innovate. How might funders innovate alongside stakeholders to unlock potential?

This means developing the same mindsets and behaviours for experimentation as we advocate for the creative sector, including an appetite for risk. Simple changes, such as rewarding brave action and quality of learning over quantitative results could have significant downstream effects by removing the fear of negative consequences for productive failure.

### 2. Value and embrace Mātauranga Māori

Look to Mātauranga Māori frameworks in the design of funding programmes. Going beyond funding Mātauranga Māori to adopting Māori values and principles in the design of 'how' the fund is designed and

operates. Genuine co-design of funding programmes with Māori creatives, producers and managers – from kaupapa to tikanga – will create new approaches to funding and produce outcomes not yet seen in Aotearoa. This is about authentic engagement with Mātauranga Māori and exploring the intersection and conflicts with Western organised systems. What Chellie Spiller calls the 'interspace'[16].

### 3. Invest for the future

Invest in the sector's ability to innovate as a strategic, long-term endeavour. Consider a 10- or 25-year strategy for creating a dynamic creative sector that has the connectivity, capability, assets and mindsets to continually generate, test and scale new developments – ensuring that they are rewarded for doing so.

For example, adopting new technologies. This is now an ongoing fact of life for all sectors rather than a point of evolution. Technologies, and their potential, will continue to develop at pace. How might funders support this in the long-term rather than supporting isolated projects? What platforms, agencies, or shared investments might accelerate this process in future? What can we learn and adapt from other sectors that have long-term strategies to develop innovation clusters?

*Don't innovate  
the product;  
innovate the  
factory.*

*– David Burkus*

Where innovation funds support project-based initiatives, there needs to be early consideration of (1) the length of time and resource that may be needed to fully test, iterate and develop, and (2) the scaling or diffusion of tested innovations. Without these steps, there will be a continual cycle of investment in novel ideas, that are not sufficiently supported to then become transformational. Funders can assist by supporting innovations through a journey from initiation to iteration. To create a supportive pathway for these projects to shift, grow and make progress over time rather than focus solely on the 'new'.

#### 4. Embrace the boring revolution

Explore the powerful potential of a 'boring revolution' by shifting focus from start-ups and innovation projects, to more fundamental and lasting change – innovating the role and execution of regulation, institutions, administration and governance. What are the high leverage shifts that could free up creative capacity for example more efficient or shared productions and

administration? Could a 'sandbox' be created to experiment with policy or regulation to create a more enabling environment? A regulatory sandbox enables innovators to conduct live experiments in a controlled environment under a regulator's supervision.

#### 5. Do the hard work of coordinating, so creatives don't have to

It can be hard to align project funding. As the norm, creatives have to source and manage multiple funders for each production. It is time consuming and it takes away creative capacity.

Innovation funding can be even more tricky. Funds are sporadic, time bound, and can lack in alignment with other funding streams. It takes time to realise potential. It requires patience with a focus on continuing learning cycles, and cycles of investment.

Before Covid-19, it took an average of about 10 years to develop a completely new vaccine. For research scientists these years were punctuated by long periods where they sought funding and following a protracted process for approval. What has happened in the last year has shown that this length of time was a design flaw, not a necessity. How might funders in arts and culture learn from this and pave a way for innovators such as aligning interests, efforts or funding criteria?

The research shows that where short-term success is prioritised it's much less likely that complex and unusual outputs will develop and be recognised as significant innovations[17]. How might innovation funding stimulate and support unusual developments that



embrace complexity and generate more significant shifts instead of short-term solutions?

## 6. Give degrees of freedom

Who is driving the agenda? How much autonomy do practitioners have to determine their priorities and the standards for the sector?

*“Funding determines practice in terms of shape and form of art, and that’s a kind of a cancer for me. It shouldn’t be driven through funding.”*

– Karl Johnstone

## Slack in the system

Research shows that organisations that consistently innovate have ‘slack’; a cushion of actual or potential resources – time, people, money – which allow an organisation to adapt successfully in response to internal or external drivers for change[18]. It’s a capacity that needs to exist over the long-term to ensure innovation can occur. How might we ensure that organisations have the ‘slack’ that’s needed over the long term to effectively innovate as the norm?

## Autonomy

It is also important to consider how centralised or decentralised decision-making is in allocating resources. When the authority for access to resource is highly concentrated – by a small group of organisations or non-practitioners – there is less potential for more widespread shifts in dominant problems, approaches and priorities[19]. This is especially true when competition for resources and rewards is intense.

Practitioners need the autonomy to determine priorities; important problems to be solved; set standards of practice, and determine how resources are allocated. It is vital to having a sector that can push new boundaries[20].

*“This dependency (on funders) means organisations are pitted against one another for inadequate sums of money, despite the popular rhetoric that we need partnerships to thrive.” – Rosabel Tan*

## Learning

Beyond setting the agenda, practitioners need resource and time to gain new knowledge, skills and competencies. This requires space from ‘critical tasks’ that are necessary just to keep the work going. Yet most funding requires a commitment to more work and

delivery. What if funding freed people from deliverables in favour of space to connect and learn from diverse spaces and industries? [The Winston Churchill Memorial Trust Fellowship](#), that focuses on learning as an outcome, is one example of this.

## Amplification

Funding calls can stimulate new initiatives and ideas that displace ongoing work programmes as creatives turn their attention to securing much needed additional resources. How might funders support creatives to amplify their current creative offers to be more sustainable in both creative and business terms?

How might we ensure that practitioners have the autonomy to dream of new horizons, set the direction and participate in resource allocation to enable greater diversity of thought and action. How might authentic co-design processes distribute power?

### Making a shift ...

From	To
Funding others to innovate	Innovate <i>with</i> and <i>alongside</i>
Funding the idea of Mātauranga Māori	Living Mātauranga Māori in 'how' we work
Short-term action	Long-term strategy
Innovation projects	Innovation system, infrastructure and networks
Novel and shiny	The boring revolution
Creatives navigate disjointed funding	Funders co-ordinate
Funding new innovation projects	Long-term slack in the system
Short-term focus on results	Engaging with complexity, tackling significant problems
Concentrated, non-practitioner decisions	Practitioner autonomy and agenda setting

In this last essay in the series The Future Emerging we have offered six provocations to funders to consider their role in innovation in arts and culture in Aotearoa. The series is intended as an exploration – a provocation – to start a dialogue about innovation in arts and culture in Aotearoa: it contains as many questions as insights.

We invite you to share with Te Taumata Toi-a-Iwi what resonates, what's missing, or any alternative perspectives that can enrich our understanding and action. We intend to collate, digest, and share the responses as the start of a dialogue on innovation in arts and culture, and how we shape the future emerging. You can do that by emailing [info@tetaumatatoiaiw.org.nz](mailto:info@tetaumatatoiaiw.org.nz)

## 6. A response from the sector

In March 2021, Manatū Taonga, the Ministry for Culture and Heritage announced details of the first round of the [Cultural Sector Innovation Fund](#). This presented a unique opportunity for a conversation about potential directions for sector innovation. To inform this conversation, Te Taumata Toi-A-Iwi commissioned a series of articles which considered potential directions for innovation in the sector.

The articles explored what is meant by ‘innovation’, and what it could look like in the context of the arts, culture, and creative sector in Aotearoa. The potential for mātauranga Māori to play an important, embedded, and significant role was also explored.

Te Taumata Toi-a-Iwi intends to keep the articles live and continually evolving - an ongoing reflection as we learn and explore the topic. This ‘response from the sector’ is the first step in this process. It is the outcome of harvesting the responses that came from Te Taumata Toi-a-Iwi social media channels, from meetings with the Auckland Investors Forum and the Council CCO group, and from testing the thinking with Ngā Toi Advocacy Network.

The most powerful of these engagements was a hosted conversation with Nigel Borell and Ema Tavola. Nigel was able to share his wisdom following his experience as curator of the ground-breaking Toi Tū Toi Ora: Contemporary Māori Art at Auckland Art Gallery. Ema shared her experience of leading arts innovation in south Auckland, and most recently reopening a

gallery in her own garage after she closed her Ōtāhuhu gallery due to Covid-19 lockdowns.

### 1. This is not provocative

The articles resonated. People read them, engaged, mused, and overwhelmingly agreed. But that doesn’t mean we didn’t get challenged. Instead of challenging the substance, people questioned the process of change itself.

*Who and what are we trying to shift through this dialogue? Who’s not reading, or listening, or engaging that needs to?*

Most of our audience are convinced - they see and feel the need for different ways to seek out, nurture, and support innovation.

We heard practitioners say...

*“We can think big and create things that have never been imagined before, but not if we’re forced to operate inside a prescribed box. Sometimes the best thing that people in management or administration can do to support innovation is simply to get out of the way”.*

*I feel like we’re missing out on seeing what real innovation looks like, because it has to fit within these really awkward structures of bureaucracy and of power dynamics.*  
– Nigel Borell

We heard administrators and managers say... *“there are restrictions and expectations around us that limit our ability to change things, to take risks, to ‘get out of the way’. We’d like to be more enabling but we feel disempowered by the structures we’re operating within.”* There is always someone else that needs to be convinced.

2. It’s about the people. He  
aha te mea nui o te ao?  
He tāngata, he tāngata, he  
tāngata

There was a strong feeling that it’s impossible to separate out the people from the process and the outcomes. Culture, life experience, and connection to place all have a strong influence on what you feel is needed, what is important and what is possible. One person with a unique viewpoint is not enough to shift the dominant systems and culture.

*As Māori we are having to navigate visibility... and really, we’re trying to intersect the dominant culture’s hold on the playing field. We’re at the periphery even when we’re innovating, or when we’re trying to be the change maker. – Nigel Borell*

Simply noticing who is or isn’t around the table is not enough. Neither is intentional diversity or ‘growing the next generation of leaders’. The underlying assumptions and behaviours need to be challenged. For example, when developing new leaders from diverse backgrounds, is it done with the intent to build skills to work within and maintain the dominant system? Or are

these diverse voices shaping the kaupapa and tikanga? Any development of new leaders needs to instead empower, and build skills, to challenge, reshape and change the system.

*The opportunity to innovate existed because we had Māori and Pacific managers leading that change... All of our managers, bar one, were Māori and Pacific locals. The innovation that came out of that space, in what I call the golden era, was a really beautiful blend of Māori and Pacific that was so unique to South side. – Ema Tavola*

The move towards more diverse spaces, especially with greater representation of Māori, from governance level, to managers, administrators and practitioners will change the dynamic. That would change the conversations, the power dynamic, the tikanga, the decisions and outcomes.

*Māori can’t do it any other way but be people-centred... that’s the nature of our own cultural philosophies... everyone’s visible, everyone’s equal, even when they’re not, because everyone has an equal say. – Nigel Borell*

3. Governance, governance,  
governance

Everyone we spoke with could agree on a common concern; the role that governance plays in setting the rules by which we all play the game. This is seen as the biggest blocker, and potential enabler, for a more innovative, equitable sector. It builds

from the points above. Some fundamental questions that were asked include:

- *If this form of governance doesn't support innovation (even for Pākehā) then what is the risk to change it?*
- *How might we rethink governance from fundamental principles? What if the structure was designed to get the outcomes we say we're pursuing?*
- *What if we thought in terms of true partnership with 50:50 Māori/non-Māori?*
- *Who is willing to try something different and be radical with governance?*

#### 4. Beautiful rhetoric, but where's the practice?

Another challenge was about the weight of rhetoric versus practice. This is especially true with people who hold positions that have the potential to be incredibly enabling if they chose to engage meaningfully in a different way of working. The perception is that there is a great deal of rhetoric about innovation, partnership and collaboration, especially with Māori. But the practice lags far behind. There was a call for the practice to lead the rhetoric, rather than the other way round.

*We need to be more invested in... practice. It means sharing the power. It means really taking a step back and trusting your colleague... letting them lead it... and don't feel that you're being neglectful. You're not. You're just empowering the partner to take the lead.- Nigel Borrel*

This resonated with Te Taumata too. How can we all start to practice what we're talking about without waiting for others to shift? If the practice leads the rhetoric, then it's not about convincing others through words and soft influence, it's about demonstrating through action what is possible. What are we willing to do today to start the journey? To further the practice of innovation and systems change?

#### 5. Innovate from where you are

We heard from people that work in many different parts of the system. Each person is looking for a way to make change. Each with their own limiting factors. Each person who supports this kaupapa needs to see the potential for change from their own place in the system. What potential exists with this organisation? What role am I willing to take?

We heard from internal agitators, friendly influencers, advocates and protestors.

It will take many different people, in different roles, with a shared kaupapa, to influence greater change. Let's provide mutual support, and challenge, to make sure we're leading from our place in the world.

#### 6. The next generation

We also heard from educators who are feeling doubtful that the education being provided now will prepare the next generation to practice innovation and transformation. The challenges sound familiar. The 'system' creates limitation and restrictions to exploration, creativity, vulnerability and a positive relationship with failure.



*(It's) interesting how some people and leaders thrive on the risk and the creativity that results from it. Others shut down. This is a challenge for educators... are we risk taking and allowing for creativity and freedom in the classroom, or shutting this down?*

– Jane Vandy Somerville

### One final note

Not many people in conversations prompted by the innovation articles expressed discomfort with the proposition of radical change, but many expressed frustration. Frustration is an emotion that comes from both external sources – that your goals and those of others are in opposition – and internal sources – a challenge dealing with perceived deficiencies, such as a lack of confidence or fear of situations. It can be present when we have a goal but we are not sure if or how we can make it happen.

We pause to ask if this frustration is another piece of armour? How do we keep resilience in the face of challenge, and keep the vulnerability that will enable us to keep moving forward without all the answers?

### What next?

Te Taumata Toi-a-Iwi set out to provoke a conversation. We found people working across the spectrum of arts and culture who are supportive and ready to agitate for greater innovation and systems change in arts and culture in Aotearoa.

This is our next jumping off point. We heard that the practice needs to lead the rhetoric. We heard innovation needs an enabling system. We heard Māori people, not just mātauranga Māori, need to be central to that change. We heard governance needs an overhaul with great potential to be an enabler.

For those of us in a position to influence innovation in arts and culture, our challenge is to:

1. Commit to engage with systems change and innovation. There is an appetite to move far beyond product innovation to innovating the system.
2. Focus on innovation practice rather than rhetoric. This needs to include authentic engagement with innovators working at the edges in the sector, and being open to evolving how you work.
3. Look at your governance. It can be a significant enabler, or the primary disabler of genuine innovation. If there is not a diversity of people and an evolution of practice (including tikanga) at governance level, then innovation will continue to be restricted.

As a next step Te Taumata Toi-a-Iwi aims to support the development of this with a focus on practice, and to support experimentation with people that would like to lead new practice. We will also share what we learn in the form of stories and practical guidance.

## Glossary

**Creative sector:** a term that is intended to be inclusive of arts, culture, heritage, and creative industries.

**Creatives / creative practitioners:** any person that has a level of contribution to the creation of arts and culture.

**Organisations:** when discussing organisations, this can mean formal organisations such as public or private NGO entities or companies, and can also mean a temporary organisation of people or groups formed for the purpose of fulfilling a project or endeavour.

**Audience:** we are adopting a definition that is broad and could include anyone that engages with arts and culture.

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