



Te Taumata
Toi-a-Iwi

*Future models of
governance for the
creative sector*

Navigating towards a new future

***Whāia te toi huarewa o te auahatanga, hei
kete toitoi manawa mō Tāmaki Makaurau.***

*Seek the pathway of creativity as a kete of
inspiration for Auckland.*

Future models of governance for the creative sector:

Navigating towards a new future

Te Taumata Toi-a-Iwi, as the regional arts trust for Tāmaki Makaurau, is supporting an ongoing conversation to explore opportunities for innovation in governance within the arts, culture and creative sector. It is a timely discussion, given the pressures faced by the sector in Aotearoa as it recovers from the impacts of COVID-19, lives with ongoing financial pressures, and looks to develop a future that is more equitable and inclusive. In this article Caren Rangi considers opportunities for innovation in creative sector governance.

This conversation has prompted me, as an independent governor and facilitator for this governance conversation, to think about my own experience of governance in both for-profit and not-for-profit organisations. It has challenged me to think about what is unique about governance in the arts, culture and creative sector, and where there are opportunities for this sector to pioneer some governance innovation.

An invitation to be involved in governance is an invitation to give back. It is an invitation to bring your professional and social experience and networks into the service of an organisation and its stakeholders. Your experience, alongside that of other board members, is then used to ensure the organisation is heading in the right direction strategically, that it is financially viable, and that it is meeting its legal and social obligations.

It sounds straightforward, but in reality, governance is often challenging. Mixed motivations, a lack of relevant experience or connection to the organisation's key stakeholders, poor interpersonal behaviours, and a misunderstanding of governance relative to management are the sorts of factors that can make boards less than effective. But when you have a board that has a rich combination of professional backgrounds, intellectual diversity, diversity in terms of factors such as culture and age, strong connections to the communities the organisation serves, and board members with a commitment to work well together, then you have a strong foundation for guiding organisational success.

Thoughts on governance in the arts, culture and creative sector

"Personally, when I look over my life in the cultural sector, creativity and identity has always been key to my whole sense of what it is to build cities and communities. I wanted to be a change agent because it always seems to me that the possibilities and vision would lead to a better sense of social justice and fairness. What I love about the arts is the fact all these issues get somehow embedded and synchronised into the individual work of artists, groups and collectives. That's what really fires my passion."

Sandi Morrison,

Te Taumata Toi-a-Iwi Ihorei, and former board member

To be involved in governance in the arts, culture and creative sector is a unique privilege. I get excited by the thought that, as a sector, we could take creative talents, practices and approaches and apply them to reshaping the way we govern our arts organisations. The artists we support deserve to have the best governance ever, and I think we all know that we could do much better in this space.

At two co-design workshops hosted by Te Taumata in early 2022, sector stakeholders began to explore what future-focused governance might look like for the sector. Participants considered what creative sector practices could be applied to governance and what conditions, voices and relationships, skills, experiences and practices would characterise fit-for-purpose creative sector governance.

Provocations I heard from the workshops included:

The value of cultural diversity

Current governance models are removed from how communities operate, and traditional Western governance processes often do not get to the heart of what is valuable to many creative sector organisations or communities. The arts, culture and creative sector has the capacity to address that. The sector includes people from the wide range of cultural and ethnic backgrounds that make up our country, and we appreciate the different ways of seeing and being that are reflected in the creative practice of the various communities. This extends to an appreciation of different ways of working together that can support better governance.

Whakawhanaungatanga, for example, acknowledges the value of understanding other people's experiences and what informs their thinking. This is an invaluable addition to board practices, an invitation to listen and learn, to sidestep the influence of the singular viewpoint of the loudest voice.

The value of creative practice

Much traditional governance operates within a paradigm of power, rather than empowerment. Power games of competitive individualism can disempower other board members, shut down debate, and marginalise management.

If we were developing fit-for-purpose creative sector governance, what would be happening?

Participant comments from the co-design workshops

"Creative lens, thinking laterally, thinking outside the conventional frame, freely revisiting and revising what and how we arrive upon outcomes..."

"The ability/skill to know how to share 'power' in a fluid way that is responsive in order to benefit the kaupapa at all times..."

"Divergent thinking – metaphor. Creatives can bring this skill to the board..."

"Governance would be a valued part of a creative organisation's whakapapa and journey..."

"Some great language around different kinds of governance structures based on whakatauki for Māori to deeply understand what kind of leadership is happening..."

"Adopting a clear commitment to the issues of equity, power relationships (both within and outside the organisation) and the place of tangata whenua and the principles of Te Tiriti within the make up of its work..."

"Understanding that power is actually in the power to serve..."

"Make it joyful!"

"Ensure that the voices that matter to the kaupapa are part of the decision-making..."

"The purpose of an organisation would provide the foundation for determining the types and variety of voices that are needed at the board table..."

Thoughts on governance in the arts, culture and creative sector

"I look at what's happening in the Māori creative space and there's so much untapped potential. Now's the opportunity to look for those areas where you can do things differently. Let's just see what happens if we change the way that the funding structures are set up. Or the governance structures or get people to think bigger about what things could look like. In Auckland, there's a huge creative sector within the Māori and Pacific communities. They're inherently creative through their music and their performance. Let's lean into that. Let's embrace that."

*Heta Hudson
Former chair of Te Taumata Toi-a-Iwi*

The creative practice of joint navigation around delivery of a shared vision is a practice that informs much of the performing arts. This offers an alternative approach that is inclusive and empowering, that respects and enables the differing gifts of the team. Governance as a dance performance anyone?

The value of the creative mind

This is a sector where across various arts forms, practitioners seek to see what is hidden, to collaborate to explore what is possible, to push boundaries, to move beyond the status quo. We need to have lived experience at the table to ensure that the artistic voice informs our thinking. The exposure to new ways of thinking is also an inducement to people from outside the sector to offer their governance skills to arts and culture organisations. They can contribute to the sector, while enriching their own governance experience in a different environment.

The value of whakamana, of talanoa

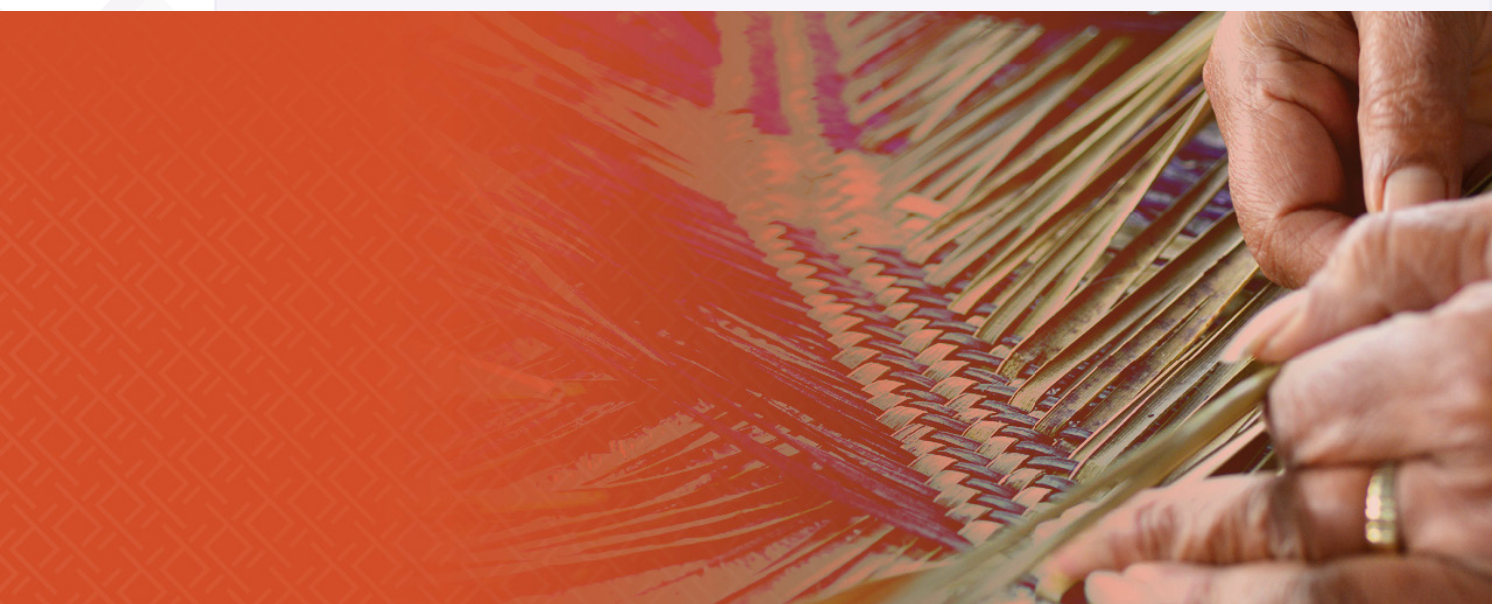
Whakamana in governance commits us to supporting people's strengths, understanding what and how board members want to contribute. Talanoa is about staying connected and in conversation, about talking critically but harmoniously. It also supports real transparency between board, management and stakeholders, minimising the gaps between what is happening around the board table, and what is happening in the wider organisation and its community.

These are just some of possibilities that I heard emerge from these co-design workshops. For me, each of these is a window into new ways of thinking about governance in the creative sector, and governance generally.

These earlier discussions are already helping guide my own participation in governance.

I look forward to hearing what is resonating for you in these conversations as we take the next steps on this journey.

Caren Rangī, ONZM





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