



## **Supporting Creative Sector Governance Development:** Impact, learning and insights

**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.

# Supporting Creative Sector Governance Development: Impact, learning and insights

Te Taumata Toi-a-Iwi is Auckland's regional arts trust. We are a centre for creative knowledge and practice, we co-design and facilitate sector conversations and connections, and we advocate for the policies, practices and infrastructure our sector needs. Our overarching focus is driving systems change that makes Tāmaki Makaurau a city alive with creativity.

One of the key systems shifts that we are seeking is to grow transformative leadership through deeper sector relationships, strengthened governance and leadership practice and models of governance and leadership that centre te ao Māori. This paper reflects on our creative sector governance work in 2022-23, which has continued to place a creative lens on governance, and make space for developing, sharing and reshaping governance practices.

## The development journey of our creative sector governance work



Te Taumata Toi-a-Iwi developed a focus on creative sector governance development as part of a series of covid-response initiatives seeking to strengthen sector capacity and capability. We commissioned a think piece on [Future Models of Governance](#) and convened a series of sector hui to explore creative governance issues and needs, with a view to developing a responsive governance capability offering.

Engagement and feedback from across this work showcased the importance of providing opportunity for connection and peer learning, giving access to governance tools and resources, and supporting organisations to strengthen their board culture.



Our first offering to support sector learning and capability was the [Future Models of Creative Governance Webinar](#). The webinar enabled experienced governors to share insights with participants about leadership, board recruitment, cultural capability, creative board processes and pathways for emerging leaders. Participant engagement with this webinar led to suggestions for ongoing spaces for governors to connect, learn and share ideas.



In 2023 we developed a pilot project to establish a community of practice for creative sector governance. Led by Caren Rangi and Judy Whiteman, our community of practice convened 24 governors and senior management leaders through open invitation, forming a pilot rōpū that was engaged across five monthly workshops.



## Community of practice purpose and approach

Te Taumata Toi-a-Iwi established a community of practice for creative sector governance in direct response to sector feedback. The kaupapa for the community of practice was to convene a facilitated, safe and collaborative space for governors to:

- share openly and have transparent conversations to explore common challenges
- exchange knowledge and experience from their respective governance journeys, strengthening both individual and collective practice
- build relationships and connections, and create space for peer support and learning
- support governance succession pathways and recruitment
- explore more aspirational/future models governance across the sector.

Session content was designed flexibly and shaped by participants' needs and goals. Participants were supported to explore different aspects of governance practice that they collectively identified as being of interest, which included mātauranga Māori models of governance, shared leadership models and effective governance evaluation. An underlying theme was exploring how creative practice could be woven into governance practice.

Whakawhanaungatanga formed a key part of the community of practice sessions, providing a process for building connections that can sustain the community of practice beyond this pilot and support ongoing shared learning and peer support between participants.

*I wished this group had existed at the beginning of my tenure as chair. I had felt isolated and lacked support and knowing I had a group of caring and compassionate people who I could have called upon for advice would have made a huge difference in my leadership and responsibilities as chair.*

*- Brenda Railey, Tautai Arts Trust*

# Participant kōrero

## Shifting culture and creating change through governance practice

Vivien Bridgwater, Chair, Auckland Theatre Company

I had come into my role as chair of the Auckland Theatre Company (ATC) with a very strong view of what the board was there to do and contribute to. This being the thirtieth year since ATC was created, I was very cognisant that I was guiding ATC on its next stage forward. In the last couple of years, the world has shifted – not just because of the pandemic, but the #MeToo movement, the Black Lives Matter movement. There have been some major global shifts and we need to be asking in this context – ‘what do we stand for and who are we?’

I’ve been really clear about what my commitment to and journey with ATC is about. Tāmaki Makaurau is the largest city in Aotearoa, it’s growing fast, and the demographics are changing rapidly. We’re the third most diverse city in the world and that requires something from us. We can’t just keep making work for the same people, we need to build new audiences, and it requires us as governors to be asking questions and thinking differently about how our organisation evolves.

I came into the Te Taumata Toi-a-Iwi governance community of practice pilot thinking about all of this. I was in a strong position in terms of having a lot of governance experience but was also aware of my aloneness in it. I leapt at the chance to be involved because I think that from a governance perspective in the arts, we don’t really take care of people. Almost all are doing governance voluntarily. There is a lot of need for support and skills development, and new models. There is no book to buy on non-profit creative governance, in a pandemic, with no funding, for a city as diverse as Tāmaki Makaurau.

The community of practice was an opportunity to create that space of support, and space for collective thinking about what is required from us in governance in the time and region we are in. We need to explore a different model, bringing different parts of our community into governance roles. If we think we are responsible for creating change, then how do our boards empower and support and give agency for that change? How do we create governance and leadership models that are right for this country, not ones that are inherited? It would be brave to completely design our own model of governance that is uniquely Aotearoa.

The community of practice has been about allowing that conversation to sit present, not tucked away. The process of going to the community of practice meetings was sometimes healing and informative, and good for networking. I was affirmed in my own experiences and reflections. It was a nice to have colleagues with the same challenges sharing generously and being empathetic. It’s a starting place for much needed conversations and shifts.

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## Collective leadership to navigate disruption

Lanita Ririnui, Executive Director, Ngā Aho Whakaari  
- Māori In Screen

*The wider sector is so disrupted, and we are still climbing back from that, which makes leadership and governance important things to focus on right now. People are tired and there is an intergenerational gap of leadership, particularly for Māori.*

I got engaged in this community of practice because I had been looking at the governance structure of our organisation and changes that we could implement to transform and revitalise it. Also, the wider sector is so disrupted, and we are still climbing back from that, which makes leadership and governance important things to focus on right now. Coming out of the pandemic, people are deciding how they want to spend their lives and there is a shift with people moving towns or quitting industries altogether. People are tired and there is an intergenerational gap of leadership, particularly for Māori.

When the leadership of our country has potential to change with the election, then the creative industry – which isn't seen as important in comparison to other industries – needs really strong leadership and governance during that shift. We need to look at who the right people are to govern in our spaces. There are lots of good leaders but we need the right people for the right time.

Right from the first session of the community of practice there was a vulnerability and openness to share that was not expected but really allowed more in terms of development between the people in the group. It felt genuine and authentic in the way people engaged, and there was a desire to look at positive solutions collectively to move everyone forward. I was grateful to lean in with the others who had similar issues and from each session there were things that came up that made me consider certain aspects of my own work trying to support my board.

I learned a lot more about giving time and space to board members and to do things outside of the board room to better the connection and try to get us to a more collective point on important issues. I don't know if I would have tracked that fast without these sessions – to have the dedicated time and space once a month to think about things was so valuable.

# Activating a community of practice – outcomes, learning and implications

## Co-design to increase responsiveness

The community of practice pilot was planned to enable co-design with participants, so that we could adaptively cater to the groups' aspirations and needs as they emerged across the sessions. This made the programme more bespoke and responsive.

## A safe space to build practice

Engagement with our community of practice showcased the need for safe spaces and learning opportunities that are dedicated to governance practice. There is an unmet need for governors to build relationships, grow support networks, and troubleshoot sector-specific challenges.

Participants reported feeling uplifted, energised and more positive about their organisation's governance development as well as their individual practice.

There was space for reflective practice, which participants were able to take into their own governance practice.

*There is a huge gap in terms of places for governors to go to explore the challenges or issues they are having around their board tables. Our participants enjoyed the fact that someone had made them a space to land and explore their experiences and challenges. We were able to create a safe space very quickly, and people were then comfortable to share openly, learn and grow. This opportunity to convene people wouldn't have happened without the leadership of Te Taumata Toi-a-Iwi, and not collectively either.*

- Caren Rangi ONZM, Facilitator

## Trust, connection and peer-to-peer support

Across the community of practice sessions, we observed a strengthening of trust and connection across participants. This enabled deep reflection and open sharing of knowledge, ideas and real-life experience to assist participants with their practice.

Community of practice members were able to establish new relationships with people on similar governance journeys, for ongoing peer-to-peer support. There could be future potential to explore a tuakana-teina approach so that emerging leaders can learn from experienced sector governors, contributing towards stronger governance succession pathways across our sector.

## Value of closed cohorts

The governance pilot was developed as a open community of practice, where anyone interested in participating could attend the workshop sessions. This open access approach was different to our other community of practice – the Wāhine and Irawhiti Leadership Programme – which has a closed cohort of ten participants. Whilst open attendance made the community of practice more accessible around work commitments, attendance was less consistent making it more challenging to facilitate deep connections between participants, and more difficult to be responsive to the groups' needs.

Through a closed community of practice model, we are better able to ensure equity of participation, giving more space to centre Māori and Moana Oceania models of governance and leadership.

## Collective thinking towards systems change

There was a clear and shared aspiration across community of practice participants to drive wider systems change in the creative sector. For participants, this lens of systems change is holistic and includes:

- Widespread governance capability development post-covid, across a sector that is often time-limited, over-committed and asset-poor.
- Exploring how creative practice can underpin the creation of a positive board culture that is unique to the creative sector.
- Evolving creative sector governance towards a model of leadership that equips creative organisations to operate in service to the unique cultural identity and landscape of Tāmaki Makaurau and Aotearoa.

*We were interested in whether there is anything in this sector that makes governance different – what is it about creative practice that you could bring into governance practice to make it stronger?*

*We did start off there thinking about future models of practice, but now I wonder if its less about future models and more about adapting practices to become more relational and about the impact of driving better culture at the board table.*

- Caren Rangi ONZM, Facilitator





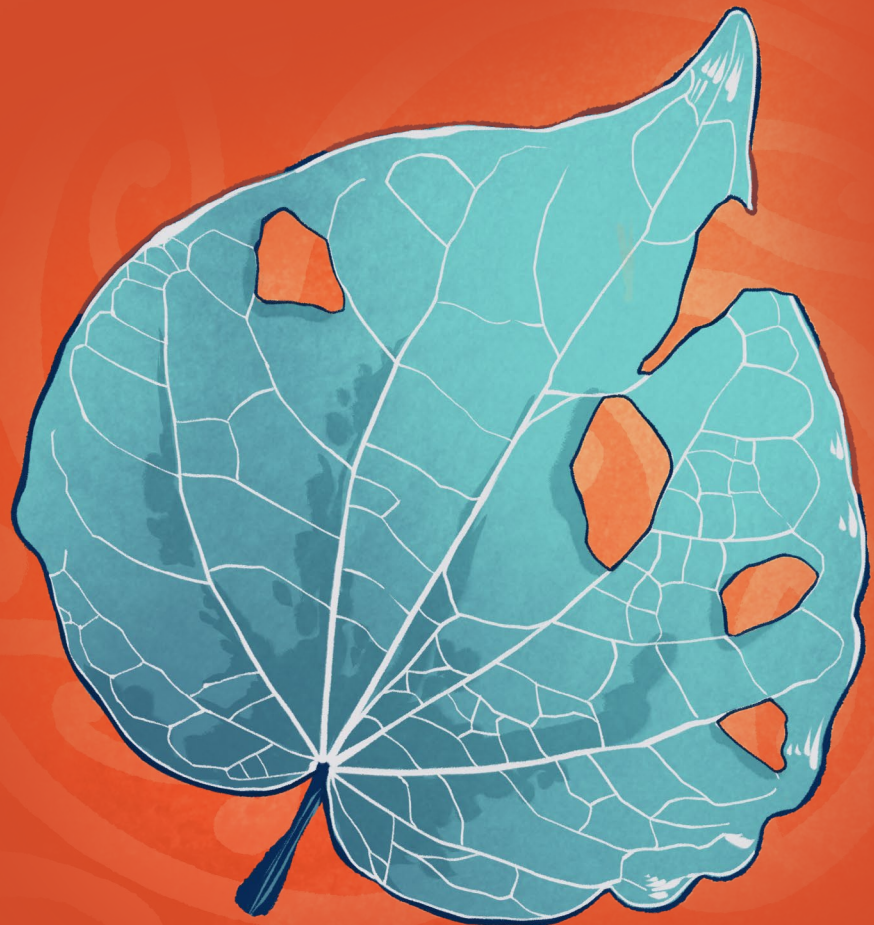
## Next steps – looking forward to 2024

Learning from our work across 2022-23 has informed our future focus for creative sector governance development. We are now looking at developing the following offerings:

A webinar series that will respond to issues and areas of shared interest that emerged through our community of practice pilot, creating space for conversation, knowledge sharing and relationship-building. Webinars will include deep-dive looks at te ao Māori and Moana Oceania models of governance.

A prototype introductory creative governance session for emerging leaders with an interest in moving into a governance space for the first time. This will seek to strengthen pathways into governance with an equity and inclusion lens.

A new chairs peer group/community of practice for leaders interested in exploring sector systems change through governance and new models of practice. Based on our learning from both our creative governance community of practice and wāhine and irawhiti leadership programme, this will be a closed and curated group. Participants will be identified through our networks based on their demonstrated interest in this space. As with our wāhine and irawhiti leadership programme, recruitment will be underpinned by principles of equity and inclusion and our [commitment to Māori](#).



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