

RANA Regional Update

Prepared for Manatū Taonga – Ministry for Culture and Heritage

September 2021



Purpose

Manatū Taonga are in the process of reviewing the *Showcasing Regions* and *Untold Stories* streams of the CARE fund, which is a part of the Cultural Sector Recovery Package. They want to know if these streams are still fit-for-purpose or if they require updating.

Manatū Taonga have asked RANA (Regional Arts Network Aotearoa) for assistance with a sector check-in to help identify gaps in different regions to see how this might impact upon the outcomes of these current funds.

This information has been prepared towards a workshop with Manatū Taonga on 5th October 2021, to discuss the needs and gaps in each region and the high-level themes that have arisen from this activity.

This paper has been divided into the following sections:

- Background
- High-level themes identified from participating RANA organisations
- Manatū Taonga’s proposed new four focus areas and how these correspond with the high-level themes
- Considerations
- Conclusion

1. Background - RANA

The Regional Arts Network of Aotearoa (RANA) is an independent network of regional arts organisations operating across Aotearoa. After meeting with members from RANA on 30th June 2021, Manatū Taonga has taken up the opportunity offered in a briefing paper prepared for Hon Carmel Sepuloni, Minister for Arts, Culture and Heritage. The paper states that RANA seeks to develop a strategic relationship with both Minister and Manatū Taonga,

whereby RANA may act as a source of information and advice on regional arts issues, and as a communications channel to regional communities of arts practitioners and organisations.

2. High-level themes

These themes were drawn from engagement with each regional arts organisation. The organisations were asked to identify barriers, gaps, and opportunities within their regions. The needs of the regions do vary dependent on their size, location, and demographics.

There are, however, some consistent themes that many regional centres face, all pertaining to a need for regional investment in sector infrastructure, including strategy and long-term planning.

We have extracted nine high-level themes from this review:

1. Impact of COVID-19
2. Lack of investment into core infrastructure
3. Reliance upon local government for support and investment, and unstable funding
4. Isolated communities – reaching into the regions
5. Building capability and capacity
6. Retaining talent
7. Lack of opportunities and support for Māori
8. Under-represented communities

Impact of COVID-19

The COVID-19 impact has been significant on an already fragile ecosystem. However, there is an opportunity to leverage off COVID-19 through the potential for a cultural shift as focus is turned inwards due to border restrictions. This is a real opportunity to invest in local creatives, to enable local stories to be told through increased equity and accessibility, and encourage local audiences to explore New Zealand work. The outcomes will be in wellbeing and sustainability, as well as a future shift in thinking around the quality of work that is created here.

Lack of investment into core infrastructure

Regional arts infrastructure is poorly funded in the regions, with reliance on a few specific funders, i.e., philanthropic and mixture of local and central government. As a result, the sector is heavily dependent on a volunteer workforce.

“The funding that comes to the Waikato is disproportionate to the range of activity that happens here. There is a strong reliance on volunteer work, and in-kind support. This has made for some excellent work, but the ability to grow audiences, to work sustainably, and to look after the wellbeing of performers and crew – alongside the audiences who attend, can reach the point of burn-out due to the lack of available funding”
- Creative Waikato

In areas where the sector is growing there is need for increased investment in facilities.

“There is a desire for more creative space in the Waikato. Particularly in Hamilton where there is a growing creative sector. This would include a creative hub studio type space for all artforms, a public gallery, and more rehearsal and development space (particularly for music and theatre/dance). There is a lack of good safe and accessible space that can enable further development across the sector” – Creative Waikato

“Tauranga does not have a creative development hub... and those looking for a multi-disciplinary creative facility are out of luck. The Historic Village has filled some gaps, with The Incubator providing some facilities and resources. And Activate Vacant Spaces (our version of Urban Dream Brokerage) is providing some temporary use of untenanted commercial spaces in the CBD. But on a greater scale our city needs more band/music practice spaces, theatre rehearsal venues and black box theatres, affordable artist studios, and arts development facilities” – Creative Bay of Plenty

“In Invercargill there is a real lack of arts facilities” – Arts Murihiku

“...post-quake Christchurch continues to suffer from a lack of appropriate space for creatives. While there has been some reinstatement of performance venues, studios and rehearsal spaces have not returned as the built environment has been built back at much higher specifications than the originals, which has led to rent increases and steep barriers to access” – Toi Ōtautahi / Christchurch City Council Community Arts.

There is also a need to increase the variety of investment in the regions into a wider range of projects and new infrastructure that meets the needs of a more diversified population. However, a challenge will be how to bring on new investment against historical and established investment. Part of this approach could include engagement with RANA members to understand regional landscapes and how any new investment might be managed.

Additionally, with no national strategy and varying levels of development and implementation of regional strategies, regional collaboration and planning between stakeholders to address specific needs is difficult to achieve. Investing in national and regional strategy now could have significant positive long-term impacts.

“Very few regions have long term plans for the arts, creative and cultural sectors” – Creative Taranaki

“... a number of strategies have been done in the past and no action resulted” – Arts Murihiku

“Creative Waikato has developed a regional arts strategy that is serving to drive collaborative impact in the arts, culture and creativity space. This will ideally see all councils, alongside community trusts, and other enablers, looking to more actively support the creative sector. And for the community to also feel ownership of the strategy in order to communicate clearly about their work, and the value of it, to work towards a cultural shift in that space”

– Creative Waikato

Reliance on local government for support and investment & unstable funding

Regional investment in the arts is still very dependent on engagement and commitment to the arts from local government. This often relies on personal relationships, building cases for investment and emphasising the wider civic values that the arts can have in a region. This varies from council to council, dependent on the level of funding available, pressure on funding (particularly in regions that are experiencing growth and require substantial investment in growing regional infrastructure), and their strategy for supporting the arts.

“While we have a few very confident arts organizations in Southland there is a lack of applications and successful applications to national funding”

– Arts Murihiku

Funding instability, with too much funding that is short-term and project-based, makes it difficult to develop a sector that is strategic and sustainable. There is a lack of investment into ongoing initiatives and core delivery. This is not achievable via short-term funding and has resulted in a fragmented sector.

“Too much funding is short-term project-based, whereas we want a sector that is strategic and sustainable. This is not achievable via short term funding” . – Creative Taranaki

“The current infrastructure perpetuates fragmentation and inequities. In Auckland, not-for-profit organisations operate in far more precarious financial positions than their counterparts in the commercial sector” – Te Taumata Toi-a-Iwi

There is a view that there are discrepancies in the distribution of arts and cultural funding across the country; between rural and urban areas and also between the North and South Islands.

“As the post-earthquake city and the Canterbury region grow, the sector feels the pressures of underinvestment and the lack of representation in the city from key arts and cultural agencies “- Toi Ōtautahi / Christchurch City Council Community Arts.

Isolated communities – reaching into the regions

Regions that cover large geographic areas can make coverage and collaboration difficult. This can result in smaller more isolated communities missing out. Funding tends to be focused on regional main centres, rather than smaller local areas or towns. Rural communities often support their own volunteer-based ecosystem, but the ability for this to grow or not suffer from volunteer burnout is a risk. This is not to underestimate the importance of support for regional main centres, but that a whole-of-region approach is needed.

“There is a major gap in funding non-main centre projects (in Taranaki, that is outside of Ngaamotu New Plymouth). Smaller towns in regions often miss out” – Creative Taranaki

*“Most of the civic arts investment here is in a limited number of locations, like the Historic Village and CBD. We need to look to more diverse and wider geographic coverage, and consider the exurbs/suburbs and the district council communities like Te Puke and Katikati as underserved communities”
– Creative Bay of Plenty*

“Wellington as a region is unbalanced – with the inevitable focus on the City and other more regional communities underserved, it would be good to see some dedicated regional capacity provided to those in the regions already doing great work and embedded in their community” – Toi o Taraika Arts Wellington

Building capacity and capability

Capability and capacity building is needed from the ground up. Currently, there is very limited support for arts capability building in the regions. There is growing potential for a national network of regionalised capability building that is funded in a sustainable way, such as the Regional Sports Trust model.

There is need for increased investment into building capabilities within the sector in arts specific areas like audience development, marketing, funding sustainability, leadership, governance, and working with different cultural world

views. There are also distinct gaps in digital literacy and connectivity in regions. This makes accessibility difficult with increased focus on digital access.

“There is a real positive sense of growing energy in the creative sector in the Waikato. There is some really exciting “world-class” work being created across all the different artforms, and there is a generally positive energy about being a creative in the Waikato, but the questions about funding, perceived value, sustainability, and having the capacity to develop wider audiences are at top of mind” – Creative Waikato

“There are very few mentoring programmes where knowledge is transferred among generations” – Creative Taranaki

“There is a lack of an overall marketing of the arts in Southland. Everyone just markets their own stuff, but if someone could market the sector as a whole people would get to see what's really there” – Arts Murihiku

“We see a real need to amplify the capability work already being done in our region. Different cultural communities have already fostered their own ways of being, knowing and working in the capability space – it’s important to us to enable this activity, and to see where we can support bridging divides between diverse creatives and cultural institutions” – Te Taumata Toi-a-Iwi

“While there is significant capability in national companies and major organisations, the infrastructure and investment for capability and capacity building for the independent sector is severely lacking in Wellington – and consistently overlooked. The independent sector has great ideas of how they would design training and development models for themselves, and this is what we’d would like to facilitate” – Toi o Taraika Arts Wellington

Retaining talent

Retaining talent in the regions can be difficult. There is not enough infrastructure to ensure there are sufficient opportunities for creatives in the regions, including different career pathways and funding streams. Many creatives often make the shift to larger urban centres, such as Auckland or Wellington, as practitioners follow opportunities. However, these urban centres also lack necessary infrastructure, and practitioners are struggling to make a living across the country.

“Our arts and culture infrastructure does not accommodate emerging, new, experimental, or anti-institutional practitioners. A lot of talent find it hard to remain, and many depart for Auckland or Wellington” – Creative Bay of Plenty

[We have] *“lots of passionate people... [who] struggle to get to the next level such as making a living off your art practice”* – Arts Murihiku

“The workforce is underpinned by its gig economy – freelance and non-institutionalised creative activities (particularly performers and artists). This flexible infrastructure makes it difficult to generate an accurate understanding of how the sector works and what the conditions are truly like. ‘Jobs’ and ‘the workforce’ cannot be characterised via traditional measures. Any initiative towards job creation and employment in the sector needs to be done with knowledge of the creative ecosystem. And the best way to do this is to work with the sector itself”

– Te Taumata Toi-a-Iwi

Lack of opportunities and support for Māori

A history of colonisation has led to a severe lack of opportunities and support for Māori. Culture is a life practice – it is integral to ways of being, doing, and knowing. Iwi, hapu, Māori arts organisations and ringatoi across Aotearoa play an important role in contributing to ngā toi and toi Māori. A te ao Māori lens provides a unique opportunity for us to think and act in distinctive ways that see the interwoven experience of things, including creativity. It is important to also consider all the key focus areas above through a Te Ao Māori lens, and support Māori-led activity and development at a larger scale. This impact is integral not only to specific Māori communities, but the whole arts, culture, and creative ecosystem. More support here is vital.

“The Māori arts sector in Tāmaki is fragmented and this is not only in general but also inter-genre. Covid has continued to highlight the deepening inequalities that Māori face and has magnified the imbalance of power and opportunities for Māori artists within the wider arts/creative sectors perpetuated by the current ecosystem of funding, investment, and support” – Te Taumata Toi-a-Iwi

“Ngā toi Māori is vital to the Waikato community. It is deeply embedded into the storytelling and cultural capabilities of local Iwi and hapu, and it is intertwined throughout other activity. But, as we more specifically address the impacts of colonialization, and the need to enable greater equity for Māori, there is a need to enable this activity and understanding through additional funding and support.” – Creative Waikato

“Ngā Toi Māori is a priority area in Toi Ōtautahi, Christchurch’s arts and creativity strategy, in the recently completed Christchurch City Council Life in Christchurch survey (July 2021) respondents articulated a strong desire to see more Ngā Toi Māori, a sentiment backed-up by CNZ’s New Zealanders and the Arts (2020). Targeted and increased funding is now crucial to ensure this occurs. One of the barriers to addressing this is the way in which funding delivery mechanisms are based on western processes and systems which require

certain legal statuses and organizational structures, which do not align with traditional collective or individual ways of practicing”. - Toi Ōtautahi / Christchurch City Council Community Arts.

Under-represented communities

Under-represented communities (such as youth, LGBTQ, Māori, Moana Oceania, Asian, disabled, and refugee-background communities) generally fall through cracks in the funding system. Diversity and accessibility through inclusion is vital to acknowledge all voices and perspectives, and to also foster a meaningful shift to a framework for inclusivity. An ethnocentric lens for investment into the arts is needed.

“Youth are not well supported in an ongoing way. Creativity could be an important touch stone for rangatahi” – Creative Taranaki

“Museum and Gallery Collections totally marginalise work by Tangata Whenua, Pasifika and Rainbow communities” – Creative Taranaki

“There are growing communities of cultural creative practitioners who become important voices for their communities and must be empowered to share their stories and to enable other voices. Creativity is a great tool for encouraging inclusivity and starting conversations about understanding other people in your communities. Our disabled communities also should have access to funding, support and creative activity. Accessibility must be front of mind.

– Creative Waikato

In Tāmaki Makaurau we’re working with Lagi-Maama Academy and Consultancy to privilege indigenous ways of seeing, doing, and knowing. Their mahi connects and builds pathways between institutions and wider Moana Oceania communities, supporting the growth of cultural intelligence and cross-cultural approaches – Te Taumata Toi-a-Iwi

3. Manatū Taonga - four focus areas

Manatū Taonga have identified four focus areas to be considered in the CARE fund review. These are:

1. Long-term access and participation. Priorities include digitisation and access to venues, creation of employment and skills development opportunities
2. Diversity of the workforce: current workforce does not reflect diversity of the New Zealand population

3. Strains on core infrastructure of sector due to COVID-19. Precarity of a sector contending with changing alert levels
4. Māori: high participation rates of Māori are not reflected in the low economic investment.

These points of departure will be a basis for the workshop; to ascertain whether these priorities are concurrent with what is being observed across the regions.

Below is a summary of where there is alignment between Manatū Taonga focus areas and the high-level themes.

Table 1 Manatū Taonga proposed Focus Areas and how these correspond with the High Level Themes.

Manatū Taonga proposed focus areas	Alignment with regional themes
<p>Long term access and participation. Priorities include digitisation and access to venues, creation of employment and skills development opportunities.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • This is reflected in a need for increased capability development in the regions, particularly around audience development and digitisation. • The regions have been working to provide employment and skills development opportunities, but continued support is needed. • Support is also needed for initiatives and approaches that help with retaining talent in the regions. • Access and investment in community-led infrastructure is key for regional and rural communities. These kinds of creative spaces become important community hubs for activity, cohesion, skills development and pathways into the sector.
<p>Diversity of the workforce: current workforce does not reflect diversity of the New Zealand population.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Under-represented communities are more likely to fall through gaps in funding across regions. This extends beyond the workforce into community-focussed activation and funding. • This could be addressed through support for diverse communities to feel empowered to share their stories. Flax roots community activation for different communities can lead to pathways for employment, and connections more broadly in the local sector and ecosystem.
<p>Strains on core infrastructure of sector due to COVID-19. Precarity of a sector contending with changing alert levels.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • This is reflected in the information from the regions, where the impact of COVID-19 was highlighted. • It is also linked to the fact that COVID-19 has amplified the fragility of an already fragmented sector that is heavily reliant on small amounts of project-funding.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Funding models that are project-based rather than for core business have exacerbated this strain, not just the impact of COVID-19. • Investing in regional infrastructure requires investing in community through enabling accessible arts and cultural activity.
<p>Māori: high participation rates of Māori are not reflected in the low economic investment.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • More support for Māori, and recognition of the value culture plays, is needed through Māori-led activation. This would be supported through enhanced capability building to support investment back into those communities.

4. Considerations

We have identified the following considerations and potentials risks:

Funding instability

- Other approaches are needed to mitigate reliance upon local government support. Funding models need to be designed and piloted that prioritise operations rather than short term projects. There is also a need to look to multi-year and co-investment models.
- There is strength in looking at the full sector ecosystem (as covered in our briefing to the Minister) to build understanding of how funding might be utilised to encourage further activation beyond the sector.
- Investment into the arts sector supports community cohesion, wellbeing and the broader societal understanding of art, culture and creativity as a public good. Supporting core infrastructure will enable multiple communities to thrive.

Isolated communities

- *Showcasing the Regions* and *Untold Stories* have the potential to be powerful enablers of isolated communities. Since their announcement, several regional arts organisations have been talking through the potential of these funds with our communities with a vision for the impact they might have.
- In times of recovery, it is even more important for people to feel that they can find representation through accessible creative activity. Diversity and accessibility all align with a vision of arts, culture and creativity

being recognised as a human right. Funding designed upon these values would have significant impact.

Lack of regional and national strategies to support the development of a more cohesive sector

- We acknowledge that while there is no guarantee for additional funding or government support after this recovery package, we need to look to what this spend now will mean post-2023, and into the future.
- Connection into regional activity for strengthening communities, building sustainable practice, providing pathways for practitioners, and supporting the wellbeing of all New Zealanders could be a vital part of this vision. We would like to understand and support how that will work in the regions and what the pathways are for amplifying and enabling regional activity. There is opportunity now to address aspirations for regional to national infrastructure.
- In utilising these funds to address broader systemic need, insights could be gleaned from case studies and evaluation that could be used for future planning and developments. This is an important area that requires much needed investment.
- Arts education and development overlap with discussions on sector sustainability and accessibility. This is about audience development, cultural literacy, sector pathways, and community building. These things are important to consider in the delivery of any programme of funding.

Digitisation

- Not all artforms can pivot to a digital platform as many creative forms do not translate into this format. It can be costly to make work of digital quality: the current return on investment is limited and the capability can take time to develop. It is also impractical for many community-led arts and cultural activity to work in a digital environment as some of the primary reasons for this activity are community cohesion, positive social activity, and the mental and physical health benefits. Digitisation can become more of a liability for many regional and rural practitioners and communities.

Employment

- Employment and workforce are signalled in two of the new focus areas. While this is certainly important, it is also being addressed in several other areas and funding streams, is connected to other professional sector funding and research, and does not address the full ecosystem of activity. Sustainable employment can be a positive by-product of systemic change that engages a full ecosystem, rather than being a sole focus area.

- A focus on employment and workforce is not a lever that enables change, it is an outcome of other changes. These are changes that could be addressed through regional activity, more diverse activity, and strengthening community work as part of the profile of our professional artists and infrastructure.

Capability

- With the current funding pools having specific focus areas on capability and wellbeing (Capability and CARE), it is important to acknowledge the impact that can occur from enabling more of these kinds of activities within diverse communities. Enabling change, through increased access and support, can help to address gaps in the sector.
- Capability and CARE have already been oversubscribed. This is due to the sector recognising the broad scope and opportunity of these funds, and actively applying for this funding in order to fill current gaps in infrastructure. Changes in the proposed funding scope would therefore need to enable more of this work. Rather than streamlining the funds into what could be seen to be a focus on employable skills, addressing emergent pathways in these areas would have more impact.
- In a COVID / post-COVID environment, there is opportunity to support strategic regional planning towards collectively re-imagining the systems that are currently in place to support the arts, culture and creative sector, thereby supporting nation-wide capacity and capability building in a fully connected way.

Conclusion

There is potential in this funding to examine the possibilities for intergenerational change. As we re-imagine the future, we need to acknowledge what already exists in the sector, while also understanding that the work we do now will have implications for the next generations of artists and creatives who will be contributing to collective wellbeing and cultural experience in the future. Equity, diversity, access, sustainability, and the systems that enable things to happen are important to address.

It would be useful to understand why the previously proposed areas of focus are no longer considered fit-for-purpose. This work should see our diverse communities of artists being fundamental to sustainable development in our society and playing core roles in supporting wellbeing and hauora. These funding opportunities can be about deepening engagement with diverse communities, inspiring regional communities throughout Aotearoa, creating opportunities and contributing to wellbeing.

We look forward to expanding on these considerations and opportunities when we meet on 5th October.