

Kia Mura! Set Ablaze!

Te kano ki te rau Report summary

Kia Mura! is the first workforce development plan for Toi Puaki (performing arts) created by Toi Mai Workforce Development Council and supported by insights from engagements with over a hundred people working in theatre and live music – including empathy interviews and creative talanoa – as well as sector analytics and data. The plan does not claim to cover the whole sector, but represents a snapshot in time, sharing insights about what the sector needs now to become a thriving workforce in the future.

As highlighted by our research and engagements, the Toi Puaki workforce faces multiple challenges, including:

- irregular and unstable work opportunities in a competitive gig economy
- a widespread stigma with whānau and communities around employment in the arts
- the perception that the arts are ‘nice to have’ and therefore not prioritised in budgeting or public financing
- better opportunities overseas causing an exodus of specialists and technicians from Aotearoa and creating a shortage
- high turnover as people leave the sector for other, better-paid work
- low ticket prices for live events, meaning that practitioners subsidise audiences’ enjoyment and wellbeing with underpaid work
- no system in Aotearoa for standardised or minimum pay rates
- invisibility of pathways into technical production and for tāngata whaikaha and tāngata turi into leadership roles
- a contestable funding model requiring a lot of effort for uncertain returns
- a heavy reliance on unpaid volunteers.

In building this plan, we have drawn inspiration from te ahi (the fire) to help tell the story of performing arts in Aotearoa. A healthy fire needs many things to burn fiercely: a spark to ignite it, oxygen to breathe life into it and plenty of dry firewood for longevity.

Toi Puaki is like a fire. The sparks are its creatives – the visionaries, the people with ideas. The oxygen of this fire are its practitioners, its back-of-house workers and its musicians; without these people, creative sparks and ideas, full of potential, would remain as just that: ideas. And finally, the fuel that keeps Toi Puaki burning are its finances. Without a fair and sustainable funding model, the fire will burn to become just a few embers and eventually be extinguished.

Currently, Te Ahi Toi Puaki (the fire of Toi Puaki) is burning low with the funding that fuels it in short and sporadic supply. Without a fair and sustainable funding model, the fire will become a few embers and eventually go out. If Te Ahi Toi Puaki can burn fiercely, then audiences and practitioners alike will flock to enjoy its warmth and beauty. The following proposed recommendations and actions are suggestions of how we can achieve this and reach our goal to see Toi Puaki thrive by '35.

Kia pai i te hua

Strategic goals and recommendations

Our recommendations

- **Embrace our natural advantage to adopt an “Aotearoa style” of training.**
 - Ngā Rātonga Tohu Mātauranga Māori Qualifications Service to work with training providers to develop an Aotearoa style of training and performance to leverage our unique stories and strengths.
- **Investigate policy levers to boost income for practitioners by 2035.**
 - Manatū Taonga and MBIE to investigate regulatory, tax and social policy options to ensure that the workforce’s incomes from creative sources match the national median by 2035.
- **Map the funding landscape.**
 - Manatū Taonga to map the funding landscape and examine ways to streamline the funding approach across different funders and agencies. Manatū Taonga to create a guide for councils and other funders to provide understanding of reasonable expectations around reporting.
- **A strategy to support regional performing arts.**
 - Manatū Taonga and MBIE to investigate ways to better support the performing arts in the regions and connect regional arts initiatives with the national arts infrastructure.
- **Improve data collection on whaikaha experience.**
 - Manatū Taonga to consult with Whaikaha Ministry of Disabled People about ways to improve community-led data collection on workforce participation in Toi Puaki, training and audience experiences.

Toi Mai actions

1. Share and collaborate with Ngā Rātonga Tohu Mātauranga Māori Qualifications Service to develop a culturally competent, skilled workforce trained in the unique opportunity that Aotearoa presents.
2. Investigate and promote pathways for rangatahi into the production and technical roles where Māori are needed to fill specialised roles.
3. Work with CNZ and the performing arts industry to reinforce remuneration practices so that artists are paid fairly for their work.
4. Work with sector partners to set equitable targets to meet the goals relating to income, and track the workforce's progress towards reaching the national median income. Interim and progress targets will help us measure progress.
5. Work with CNZ and other relevant agencies to promote existing business supports for creatives.
6. Explore the needs of the workforce with regard to qualification support for business and entrepreneurial skills for creatives.
7. Further research into the cause of the workforce shortages in technical production and backstage roles to understand why training isn't meeting these shortages and how to attract people into this workforce.
8. Ensure through our own processes and relationships that qualifications are developed with Pacific practitioners, and advocate for more Pacific content through programme endorsement.
9. Work with dance industry to create accessible qualifications for community dance teachers.
10. Advocate for a peak body to be established for Pacific workers in Toi Puaki.
11. Explore the benefits for Aotearoa in embracing its status as a powerhouse of Pacific music.
12. Ensure through our own processes and relationships that qualifications are developed with tāngata whaikaha and tāngata turi, and that we advocate for equity of access through programme endorsement.

To download the full plan, visit toimai.nz