

Skills in the creative sector

Summary – [*Skills in the creative sector*](#)

Toi Mai Workforce Development Council commissioned well-known economist Shamubeel Eaqub to articulate the economic contribution of New Zealand's creative sector. This research confirms that our creative sector – people working in creative roles and creative industries – is a core economic pillar, generating significant financial and cultural value to New Zealand.

The creative sector produces a lot of value to our economy – more than you may think...

The research showed the creative sector contributed \$12.9 billion to New Zealand's economy in 2022, from just 90,000 jobs – this is around 4% of GDP. People working in creative roles carry an outsized amount of this amount – worth \$11 billion a year compared with creative industries' impact of \$2 billion.

The creative sector also exports a lot of goods and services to other countries, with commodity exports worth \$3.6 billion in 2023 – making it our fourth largest export commodity.

...and the creative sector is highly productive – about the same as agriculture

There is a persistent myth the creative sector is low in productivity, which reflects inconsistent and irregular work rather than low value per hour. When adjusted for hours, this research demonstrated the high productivity of the creative sector at around \$346,000 per person per year – comparable to agriculture at \$319,000 and well above the national average of \$197,000.

Our training system is not preparing people for creative sector work, however

The other key finding of this research is the strong misalignment between creative training and creative work – the people who do creative work don't tend to rely on training, while the people who train don't tend to do creative work.

The numbers are stark – only 13,000 of the approximately 47,000 who work in creative jobs have a creative qualification. This signals that creative training isn't relevant for a lot of creative work – as most roles are filled by people without creative qualifications.

Making the most of our creative sector relies on a responsive education system

Our creative sector needs a steady pipeline of skills to realise its economic potential and ambition, which our training system is not equipped to deliver (even with the vocational reforms). Rather, our creative sector needs an active partner coordinating functions likely to underpin strategic, long-term industry planning.

The research makes three key recommendations to boost the creative sector:

1. Recognise creative skills as essential to long-term public value.
2. Reform the training system to reflect real creative pathways – thinking beyond just longform qualifications.
3. Re-establish coordination mechanisms grounded in real conditions (not just qualification development).