

Advocacy case study Te Taumata Toi-a-Iwi

About Te Taumata Toi-a-Iwi

Te Taumata Toi-a-Iwi is Auckland's regional arts trust. It invests in regional creative sector development by providing capability support, brokering connections, commissioning research to grow knowledge and practice, and mobilising sector advocacy to influence policy and investment practice. Its vision is 'Tāmaki Makaurau, a city alive with creativity'.

Under its current strategy, Te Taumata deliberately moved away from being a small scale grantmaker, instead using income from its \$10m endowment fund to initiate and invest in projects that support its vision and strategic priorities. Supporting regional and national advocacy for systems change has become a key pillar of this investment approach.

Advocacy journey

Te Taumata launched its new strategic direction in 2020, just as the early impacts of COVID-19 started to be felt across the creative sector. This led Te Taumata to focus on building connections with arts advocates, sector leaders and other regional arts organisations to better understand the sector's needs and use this evidence to inform advocacy for greater local and central government investment in recovery and rebuilding.

Te Taumata initiated and co-invested in the development of a sector survey series and convened a new network, the Ngā Toi Advocacy Network. This enabled a more joined-up and unified sector voice. Te Taumata has since supported the evolution of this network into a national platform, [Arts Action Now!!!](#) This online hub acts as a backbone and rallying point for sector-led advocacy, enabling information sharing, community mobilisation and campaigning around emerging issues of regional and national importance to artists, creative organisations and communities.

Types of advocacy engagement and impact

Advocacy is viewed by Te Taumata as an essential tool for systems change, with a focus on centring the needs of artists, strengthening investment in the creative sector and ensuring policy and practice reflects diverse understandings of 'art'. Te Taumata engages in many forms of advocacy, with key examples highlighted below.



Funding advocacy (including alternative practice)

Te Taumata has provided seed funding to develop and launch [Te Manawa](#) – a Māori-led movement to support Māori arts in Tāmaki Makaurau. One strand of Te Manawa is providing backbone support for Māori artists to advocate about the future of ngā toi Māori. Investment by Te Taumata helped to leverage Innovation Funding from Manatū Taonga Ministry for Culture and Heritage.

Te Taumata provided additional seed funding for Te Manawa to develop a model of alternative funding practice, Pataka, centred on mana motuhake and artist-led decision-making. The vision is to disrupt competitive and euro-centric funding models, to influence future funding practice. Te Taumata has helped to broker co-investment from Auckland Council and Foundation North to prototype the proposed Pātaka approach in 2024/25.



Growing advocacy capacity

In 2023, Te Taumata initiated the [StopTheCuts](#) advocacy campaign alongside Arts Makers Aotearoa and other community partners. This sought to prevent Council funding cutbacks that would have severely impacted the creative sector. A key strategy of StopTheCuts was to build the capacity and capability of the sector to respond, co-ordinate, share assets and amplify their influence.

Te Taumata funded the creation of an online portal and collaborated with other partners to provide easy-read information, submission guidance and templates, social media campaign collateral and media training to arts advocates/spokespersons.

The StopTheCuts campaign contributed to 'arts and culture' being the top theme in the Auckland Council budget submissions, helping to influence a wind back of \$35million in proposed cuts that would have adversely impacted the creative sector.



Evidence for change

Since 2020, Te Taumata has commissioned and invested in many key pieces of research that evidence evolving sector needs and put forward alternative models of practice: [State of the Sector](#) surveys tracked the impacts of COVID-19 on the creative sector, helping to influence investment in sector recovery.

The '[Arts of Moana Oceania](#)' research and Tok Stori Tuesdays, led by Lagi-Maama, was commissioned to address knowledge gaps across the creative and cultural sector. The work challenged western-centric perceptions of what 'art' is, presenting an indigenous world view from 17+ island nations with diaspora communities in Aotearoa.

[Enter the Multiverse](#) shared the aspirations of the Asian diaspora arts communities in Tāmaki Makaurau, and has subsequently been used to inform the priorities and approach of Creative NZ's and Foundation North's [Asian Artists' Fund](#).

The [Creative Sector Investment Ecosystem Mapping](#) research annually maps regional arts funding to identify gaps and opportunities for collaboration. For the fourth iteration of this research, [case studies](#) were added to highlight funding interdependencies and challenges. Initiated by Te Taumata, this research now receives co-investment from members of the Auckland Arts Investors Forum (a collective of creative sector investors). It is intended to help identify strategic opportunities for collaboration; in particular shifts related to the creative sector funding system/practice.



Collaboration, convening, mobilising

Building on StopTheCuts, Te Taumata worked with the Regional Arts Network Aotearoa to develop Arts Action Now!!! as a backbone for community-led advocacy. A new online hub was developed and first used in the run up to the 2023 election to daylight key policy issues and support sector advocacy around the value of art and creativity, and the need for a national arts and culture strategy. A current focus is a campaign to reinstate the Creatives in Schools programme.

Arts Action Now!!! is helping to strengthen existing networks, encourage collaboration and springboard collective advocacy around key regional and national issues, including supporting submission on the new draft Creative and Cultural Strategy for New Zealand, [Amplify](#).



Direct advocacy

Using knowledge and evidence of community needs, Te Taumata has provided [policy advice](#) to Manatū Taonga Ministry for Culture & Heritage and [briefings](#) for incoming Ministers.

Oral and written submissions to Auckland Council have been made by Te Taumata, alongside written letters to Councillors, to advocate for continued sector resourcing as part of Council Budget consultations. Te Taumata was able to use its legacy Council Controlled Organisation (CCO) status and connections to identify effective communication strategies.

Learning/insights

Te Taumata highlights the impact that can be achieved through a multi-faceted and long-term approach to supporting advocacy.

Crisis has been an effective catalyst, providing the sense of urgency and motivation that has helped to mobilise communities and increase the reach and influence of Te Taumata and its advocacy efforts. However, the ability to use crises as opportunities relied on Te Taumata undertaking the preceding and slower-burn work to build the conditions for effective advocacy: establishing and convening networks; building trusted relationships with allies that have shared goals; and establishing a body of evidence about the needs of the sector and value of the arts.

Collective advocacy has been the pillar of success for Te Taumata and its advocacy initiatives. Whilst the scale of investment that Te Taumata can provide is relatively small, working collectively has leveraged other resources and skills. Taking a more networked approach to advocacy has amplified reach and influence and helped to build solidarity that supports the wellbeing of advocates over the long haul. The joined-up approach has also helped Te Taumata navigate the complexities of being a regional organisation that inevitably needs to engage nationally to have a systems influence.

Whilst Te Taumata has engaged in direct advocacy, it has also been clear in its focus on capability building. By providing open-source resources, examples and tools, Te Taumata has contributed to increasing the scale, reach, unity and longevity of creative sector advocacy efforts. The efficacy of advocacy has also been lifted by prioritising collective approaches where ideas and resources are shared.

Another success strategy for Te Taumata has been trying different approaches and investing in [learning](#) and evaluation. This meant that lessons were distilled from early engagement in advocacy, like the Ngā Toi Advocacy Network and StopTheCuts, and have informed the current approach. Te Taumata has learned to be flexible, maintain relationships and activate clusters of stakeholders when issues arise, and when conditions are ripe to influence change.

Te Taumata is clear about the level of risk it is willing to take with its advocacy work. It is intentional about raising the voice of the sector and using its funding and political networks to ensure this voice is heard in the right decision-making spaces.