

Irirangi Te Motu  
**NZ On Air**



# **INVESTMENT STRATEGY**

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## Purpose

This document presents a new investment strategy which we will implement from July 2023. Our previous strategy, the [NZ Media Fund](#), has been in place for five years, and during that time, we've witnessed a transformation in our cultural sector and the way local audiences connect with the stories and songs of Aotearoa New Zealand.

To successfully navigate the complexities of this journey, we've developed a new investment strategy that embraces a future-making mindset. Our aim is to strengthen our ability to reflect and develop New Zealand culture and identity, which has been our purpose since our establishment in 1989.

This paper provides details of the investment strategy and our vision for the growth and development of the sectors we support and represent. It's based on extensive kōrero, both formal and informal, that we've had with the sector over the past five years.

*He rangi tā matawhāiti, he rangi tā matawhānui*

*A person with narrow vision has a restricted horizon;  
a person with wide vision has plentiful opportunities*

## Introduction

Our mission at NZ On Air remains focused on reflecting and developing Aotearoa New Zealand's culture and identity.

We achieve this goal by offering funding for diverse, high-quality content and its distribution, which inspires, engages, and entertains local audiences in an easily accessible manner.

Our primary aim is to serve communities and cultures that are often overlooked in the local media. Our mandate emphasises the fundamental cultural objective of our funding, which is to promote the interests of all people in New Zealand. Our legislation provides special provisions for Māori, women, youth, children, persons with disabilities, and minorities<sup>1</sup> in the community – with a particular focus on Pasifika, Chinese New Zealanders, and Indian New Zealanders, given the size of these communities in Aotearoa.

## What has changed?

*Kohikohi ngā kākano, whakaritea te pārekereke, kia puāwai ngā hua*

*Gather the seeds, prepare the seedbed carefully, and you will be gifted with abundance of food*

The new strategy takes a more holistic approach to cultivating our sector, balancing investments in research and insights, talent development, content creation, distribution, and enhancing the discoverability of funded content.

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<sup>1</sup> Language is from the Broadcasting Act: 'minorities in the community including ethnic minorities', Section 36 (c), <https://www.legislation.govt.nz/act/public/1989/0025/latest/DLM158014.html>

Previously, pūtea for research, sector partnerships, content and industry development constituted a small section of the NZ Media Fund. However, in the past five years, it has become clear that we have a responsibility to better understand our audience's relationship with local content and to support and enhance environments that provide creators with equitable access and opportunities to tell stories, capture our news and history, and create music that represents and reflects Aotearoa.

## The 'why'

Our strategy is built upon fundamental principles of public media. These encompass enhancing the culture of Aotearoa New Zealand, expanding the variety and inclusivity of local content accessible to New Zealanders, guaranteeing that content is easily accessible, strengthening social cohesion, and promoting well-informed discussions.

In essence, public media funding must be granted for a clear cultural or social purpose, in addition to the standard expectation that content will captivate and/or entertain an audience. These objectives set public media apart from commercial media.

Our investment strategy aims to inspire, engage, and entertain local audiences with the stories and songs of Aotearoa. We do this by investing in quality, diverse, and discoverable content.

OUR GOALS/IMPACTS

The four pou/ pillars of our investment strategy enable delivery against our three investment goals.



**GOAL 1**  
SUPPORT QUALITY CONTENT



**GOAL 2**  
SUPPORT DIVERSE CONTENT



**GOAL 3**  
ENSURE DISCOVERABLE CONTENT

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The impacts we seek to create are expressed as:

**QUALITY**  
Local audiences watch, listen, and love local content that matters to them

**DIVERSITY**  
Local audiences connect with a diversity of content made by, for and about their cultures and communities

**DISCOVERABILITY**  
Local content is found and easily accessed in the places where audiences are

## Quality Content

*Local audiences watch, listen, and love local content that matters to them*

- Funded content will reflect Aotearoa New Zealand in engaging, innovative and informative ways.

- Funded content will be seen to be different to similar local content made without public funding.

## Diverse Content

*Local audiences connect with a diversity of content made by, for and about their cultures and communities.*

- Creators will have equitable access and opportunities to make local content, ensuring that the principle of "nothing about us without us" is upheld and that diverse perspectives are represented.
- Audiences will have access to a diverse range of local content, representing a variety of perspectives and reflecting the diversity of Aotearoa New Zealand.

## Discoverable content

*Local content is found and easily accessed in the places where audiences are.*

- Funded content will be easily discoverable and available to audiences on the platforms they use.
- Our default stance is that content should be freely accessible to watch or listen to when it first becomes available, and at regular intervals thereafter.

## The 'what'

Our investment strategy is guided by the fundamental principles of equity, partnership, participation, and protection enshrined in Te Tiriti o Waitangi, which underpin all our activities. NZ On Air plays a crucial leadership role in promoting equity for Māori and for other groups historically and currently experiencing inequity. Our priority is to support a range of voices and experiences, including those of people from varying ages, races, ethnicities, abilities, genders, religions, cultures, and sexual orientations.

Our approach centers around authentic storytelling from and by these groups. We prioritise cultural authorship, ensuring that the key creative team has a deep understanding and connection to the stories and songs they wish to create and represent.

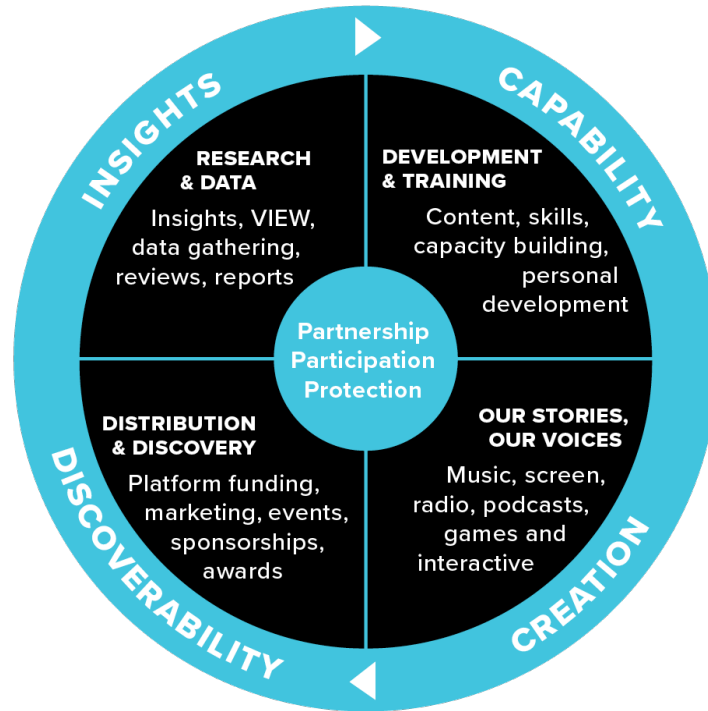
### **Our new investment strategy aims to achieve the following:**

- To fund bold and distinctive local stories and songs for any platform.
- To collaborate and support the Māori music and screen sector in conjunction with Te Māngai Pāho and Te Tumu Whakaata Taonga / NZ Film Commission, with the goal of creating comprehensive outcomes for Māori content, production companies, and creatives. We are guided in this mahi by our Māori strategy, or rautaki Māori, which we will be updating in 2023.

- To integrate principles of equity and representation into all aspects of our work. We believe that local content should be a true reflection of our people, showcasing the diverse walks of life that are uniquely found here, in Aotearoa New Zealand.
- To explore opportunities to integrate and align funding for music, video, and interactive content to enhance the quality, scale, and impact of our funded projects.
- To gain a deeper understanding of the behaviours and needs of audiences that are traditionally difficult to reach, in order to provide them with local content that resonates with them and fosters a meaningful connection.
- To invest in marketing and discoverability to ensure that local stories and songs are easily accessible and embraced by local audiences across various platforms.
- To support the development of talented local creators at all stages of their careers and encourage growth and innovation in domestic Intellectual Property (IP).
- To make our processes accessible, straightforward, and adaptable for all applicants.

Our investment strategy is based on a cyclical process of four phases, each building on the previous one and informing the next. We believe that this model will help us achieve our strategic goals of funding high-quality, diverse, and discoverable content that fulfills our legislative mandate to "reflect and develop New Zealand culture and identity." Our strategy generates momentum towards the long-term endurance and vitality of our sectors by continually repeating this cycle.

## The four phases of our investment strategy



**Insights:** Gaining deep understanding and insights into our audiences, their needs, preferences, and behaviours in relation to local content, and using this knowledge to inform our funding decisions and content strategies.

**Capability:** Building the skills, knowledge, and capacity of our team and our funded creators to adapt to changing media landscapes and emerging technologies, and to drive innovation and creativity in the production and distribution of local content.

**Creation:** Supporting the development, production, and distribution of high-quality and distinctive local content across a range of platforms and formats, with a focus on diversity, cultural authenticity, and excellence.

**Discoverability:** Promoting the discoverability and accessibility of local content through effective marketing, distribution, and audience engagement strategies, and leveraging the power of digital technologies to reach and engage with audiences wherever they are.

## INSIGHTS

The Insights phase encompasses our internal and external research conducted with audiences and stakeholders. We also use our proprietary measurement tool, NZ On Air VIEW, to track the performance of funded content, as well as our analysis of funding and application data over time. We believe that strategic investment in research, data, and insights is essential to ensure

that we are investing in the appropriate content, in the right locations, to reach our audiences, and to learn from the performance of that content.

## Research

As a funder of local content across online, music, radio, and television, NZ On Air plays a crucial role in shaping the public media landscape of Aotearoa New Zealand. To ensure that we continue to invest in content that resonates with our audiences, we regularly conduct research both internally and in partnership with external experts.

Our research efforts aim to better understand the needs and behaviours of audiences, with a particular focus on under-served groups. We also analyse the composition of the screen and music industries to identify trends and opportunities for growth and diversity. In our research, we track representation of gender, ethnicity, disability, region, and genre to ensure that we are funding content that reflects the diversity of our society.

We are committed to sharing the insights we gain from our research with the wider industry to help foster a more vibrant and responsive media sector in Aotearoa New Zealand. Recent and ongoing research initiatives include:

- Where Are The Audiences
- Where Are The Youth Audiences
- Children's Media Use (with BSA)
- Chinese and Indian New Zealanders' Media Use
- A Profile of Creative Professionals (with CNZ)
- Public Awareness and Attitudes Survey
- Diversity Reports (Music and Screen)
- Stakeholder Survey
- Policy reviews / reports

## Data

*NZ On Air VIEW* is a proprietary audience measurement system developed by NZ On Air. It gathers online data on the content that we fund and presents it in a dashboard. Most of this data is commercially sensitive and intended for internal use only. However, we will share high-level trends and information publicly, whenever possible.

Platforms that distribute NZ On Air-funded content (excluding music) must provide us with regular and accurate performance metrics across all media distribution aspects. This reporting is a crucial requirement for funding and must be taken into consideration before submitting any applications.

We will implement a dual system of passive measurement, currently through *NZ On Air VIEW*, and third-party syndicated research, such as Nielsen. In addition, we will also gather data



supplied by producers and platforms across owned and earned channels outside of the primary distribution platform.

## CAPABILITY

Our capability initiatives aim to develop industry skills and content to increase the capacity of our sector and generate local content that provides career opportunities for our talented creators. We do this in partnership with the sector guilds and industry bodies.

We see a strong connection between investment in content development and industry skills and capacity building to ensure high-quality content is produced by a diverse range of voices. The ecosystem needs all types of content and creators to thrive and grow.

Our aims across music, screen and audio are focused on the following four areas (STAR):

**STORIES and SONGS:** Funding the development of bold and distinctive local stories and songs for any platform.

**TALENT:** Supporting the development of local creators at all stages of their careers, fostering growth and innovation in domestic intellectual property (IP).

**AUDIENCES:** Investing in marketing and discoverability to make local stories and songs easily accessible and embraced by local audiences on various platforms.

**REPRESENTATION:** Integrating equity and representation principles into all aspects of our work to ensure that local content truly reflects our people and showcases the diverse walks of life unique to Aotearoa New Zealand.

## CREATION

Creation includes contestable funding for music, as well as for scripted and non-fiction\* content across various mediums, including video, radio, podcasts, and interactive content. We aim to distribute this content across multiple platforms, including digital platforms, radio, and television.

### \*Renaming Factual as Non-fiction

We have renamed our Factual category as Non-fiction, as we believe it better encompasses the range of content that falls within this category. We have outlined our updated definitions below. This change is unlikely to have a significant impact on producers, but it will help us categorise our investments across the two strands more effectively. If you have any questions about the genre of your project during the submission stage, please do not hesitate to contact our Funding Team at [funding@nzonair.govt.nz](mailto:funding@nzonair.govt.nz).

We define **Scripted** as any media content with a fictional, scripted storyline, including genres such as drama, dramedy, and comedy.

**Non-fiction** is defined as any media content that attempts, in good faith, to convey information about the real world, rather than being grounded in imagination or fictionalisation. It includes

genres like documentaries, public interest journalism, events coverage, comedy panel shows, unscripted comedy.

## Music

Puoro (music) pūtea supports the development, recording, and promotion of single songs and multi-song projects. We actively promote local music to streaming services, local radio and media to increase its discovery in a crowded market.

We run multiple puoro funding rounds per year. For your best chance of a successful application, first read about the funding you are applying for: [New Music Single](#), [New Music Project](#), [New Music Development](#), [Waiata Takitahi](#), [New Music Pasifika](#) or [New Music Kids](#).

You can also read about submitting your waiata for our [NewTracks](#) compilation which promotes latest releases to ,streaming services, local radio and media.

## Non-fiction

Non-fiction pūtea focuses on audio/visual/interactive projects made for audiences including those that are hard-to-reach. Funded content may involve different regions and cultures across Aotearoa, investigate significant topics of current or historic interest, may involve public interest journalism, provide useful local information in an engaging way, or cover an event or issue important to culture and identity in Aotearoa.

Non-fiction may also include content that empowers a democratic society, supporting the public's right to know and be informed on issues that affect them and their communities.

## Scripted

Scripted pūtea focuses on audio/visual/interactive projects made for audiences including those that are hard-to-reach. Our funding levels for Scripted have been redefined as tiers:

- **Tier 1:** Projects seeking >\$3m
- **Tier 2:** Projects seeking \$1m - \$3m
- **Tier 3:** Projects seeking <\$1m

There is no funding cap for digital-only-release projects. However, we encourage networks to support secondary linear release windows where suitable to reach the widest possible audience and to support the business case for the funding requested.

These changes will allow us to invest more sustainably in the scaling up of Scripted series that sit somewhere between the \$6m - \$7m series and the smaller-scale digital-first series (circa \$500k – \$1m). This will deliver a breadth of compelling and entertaining content to local

audiences, grow the capability and capacity of our screen sector, and hopefully continue the trend of domestic IP projects succeeding overseas.

## Children's content

We are dedicated to ensuring that a range of local songs and stories reach our tamariki and have a positive impact on their lives. To achieve this, we invest approximately \$14 million annually in distinctive, culturally rich content from Aotearoa New Zealand that sparks creativity and curiosity. We believe that as young citizens, children have a right to easy access to stories and songs that are appropriate for their age and stage, which contributes to their growth and their role as future participants in our democracy.

Our [Children's Content Funding Framework](#) is based on these principles.

## Funding rounds (excluding Music)

We will run **three funding rounds per year** (excluding Music) and we will more evenly spread the pūtea across these rounds. Each round will be open to targeted audiences' content (i.e. children) alongside general audiences content. Our priority focus will remain on targeted audiences as it is the core cultural purpose of our funding.

## Music funding rounds

We run multiple puoro funding rounds per year:

- New Music Project – four rounds per year
- New Music Single – five rounds per year
- New Music Development – two rounds per year
- New Music Pasifika – two rounds per year
- New Music Kids – two rounds per year
- Waiata Takitahi – one round per year

## Supporting platforms (excluding Music)

Our default requirement for content intended for general audiences remains that Scripted and Non-fiction applications will require local market attachment and applications must be supported by a local broadcaster or platform with demonstrated local audience reach.

However, we are open to funding content directly to international platforms if there is a clear evidence base for connecting with hard-to-reach audiences.

We encourage multi-platform distribution of content wherever possible.

As a general rule, content should be available free to New Zealand viewers and listeners for as long as possible.

Supporting platforms should be/provide:

- free access to the content
- audience data and insights
- a well-considered and well-resourced marketing plan for reaching audiences
- an audience for funded content that is appropriate for the size of pūtea sought
- an established, viable business
- a sustained commitment to local content for New Zealand audiences
- co-investment in screen content as this strengthens the business case of an application by demonstrating committed market attachment.

Please be aware that if supporting platforms require content exclusivity for screen content, appropriate co-investment in the production budget will be necessary.

## **Feature films**

As we are witnessing significant changes in the release and windowing of feature films, we acknowledge the need for better coordination with the NZ Film Commission for films with significant cultural value for local audiences. We do not have a cap for feature film funding, however, we anticipate remaining a minority funder in feature films and documentaries that are typically co-funded by the NZFC.

## **Interactive and games**

We acknowledge that our current budget constraints limit our ability to support a large number of interactive and games projects. However, we remain committed to working with the sector to facilitate the development of local games that can engage and connect with our younger audiences.

## **Podcasts**

A podcast is a series of digital audio files that can be downloaded or streamed and listened to at the listener's convenience.

We accept podcast applications for both Scripted and Non-fiction funding rounds. However, due to our limited funds, we have to carefully select which podcasts to support. We give priority to podcasts that require significant research and address public media topics that are not covered elsewhere.

We are less likely to consider funding interview-style podcasts with low production costs. The podcasts we fund should have a well-defined distribution plan to reach a sizable and/or targeted audience.

We are open to supporting podcasts that have partnered with global podcast networks. In certain cases, we may consider funding projects behind a paywall if there is a significant contribution from the platform and if the content will also be made available for free.

Please contact the Funding Team ([funding@nzonair.govt.nz](mailto:funding@nzonair.govt.nz)) if you have questions about your podcast project's eligibility.

## Discoverability

Discoverability pūtea covers not only content distribution through our closed platform funding stream, but also activities that help promote the discoverability of content through paid marketing, industry events and conferences, and awards support. Our aim is to increase awareness and appreciation of the quality of local content among New Zealanders and ensure that they know where to find it.

## Platforms

Platforms pūtea provides operating funding to specially targeted services to create and deliver audio/visual public media content of cultural or social value. We will rarely fund new platforms and will not accept unsolicited applications to this stream.<sup>2</sup> Current entities we support:

- RNZ (Radio New Zealand)
- 12 community access radio stations from Auckland to Invercargill plus Access Media NZ<sup>3</sup>
- Student Radio Network - supporting five student stations to champion local music
- National Pacific Radio Trust (Niu FM and 531 Pi) and Samoa Capital Radio
- NZ On Screen and AudioCulture (through the Digital Media Trust) - showcasing NZ screen and music history
- Able - providing captions and audio description to make screen content accessible to all.

We require annual funding applications from each funded Platform, except RNZ, to ensure excellent content is provided efficiently and enjoyed by diverse audiences. RNZ's non-contestable funding is guaranteed, and the amount is set by Government.

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<sup>2</sup> We are unlikely to change this policy unless we receive specific funding for this purpose or decide, after consultation, that market shifts mean that content is best delivered in a new way. In such a case we will likely seek expressions of interest.

<sup>3</sup> Twelve stations are currently funded: Planet FM Auckland, Free FM Waikato, Access Radio Taranaki, Access Manawatu, Radio Kidnappers Hawke's Bay, Arrow FM Wairarapa, Coast Access Radio Kapiti, Wellington Access Radio, Fresh FM Nelson, Plains FM Canterbury, Otago Access Radio, and Radio Southland.

## Marketing and media agency partnership

NZ On Air Music funding allows for the cost of the marketing and promotion of a song or a body of work (i.e., an EP or album) to be included in the budget submitted for funding.

In terms of screen funding, NZ On Air provides production funding to producers to produce content. The majority of those projects have a local platform attached that among other things:

- provides a promotions plan for the funded content
- can reach an audience that is appropriate for the size of the content investment.

Historically, all the promotion has been done by the commissioning platform, using primarily owned channels, but also earned and paid channels depending on the size of the project.

Increasingly over the past five years however - as the media landscape and media consumption changes (starkly and rapidly in the case of children, youth, and Asian audiences) - local commissioning platforms are struggling to fulfil that promotion role to the fullest extent necessary to reach the intended target audiences.

To address this, NZ On Air is open to providing funding for marketing alongside funding for production for content. We intend this funding to augment rather than replace platform marketing where there is a local platform involved.

One of the key issues that the sector faces is that screen producers do not have access to the expertise of a media agency. Media agencies brief in paid channels, evaluate these, and manage the media buying and placement process. They also have the scale to unlock lower rates or higher profile placements.

Providing projects directly with a media budget is difficult as the size of each individual budget is not enough to effectively engage the services of a media agency or buy advertising directly.

For these reasons, we have designed and introduced a discoverability initiative in partnership with Contagion. What makes this initiative effective is the ability to combine many small campaigns into one overall budget. This initiative includes the provision of funding for paid marketing and promotion - media buying and channel planning. This allows us to leverage scale and build shared tools and knowledge.

We are testing this new approach with children's projects first and we will be rolling this out strategically from July 2023 across selected scripted and non-fiction projects.

Projects considered for media support will be evaluated and categorised into three tiers based on established criteria by both staff and Contagion:

- **Tier 1** - Flagship content with high funding levels, assessed to have a high likelihood of success if barriers to discovery removed.
- **Tier 2** - Strong content with one or more indicators of potential success if barriers to discovery are removed.

- **Tier 3** – Content for hard-to-reach audiences with lower funding levels that has not yet proven itself with an audience.

The over-arching aim of these efforts is to improve discoverability of NZ On Air funded content.

## Events and industry awards support

We sponsor industry events, conferences, and awards to promote the quality of local content among New Zealanders and to support our creative sectors in consistently producing quality content. We have a limited amount of pūtea available for sponsorships annually.

The sponsorships we offer are for:

- National awards that recognise and celebrate creative skills and quality content.
- National events or conferences that aim to connect and upskill media professionals, creatives, and creative practitioners.

Our preference is for sponsorships to directly support one of the key sectors we fund, and for us to be minority funders.

Funding is contestable and there should be no expectation of ongoing funding.

## What we won't fund

Certain projects are not eligible for funding. These include:

- Scripted and Non-fiction projects seeking completion funding without securing platform investment.
- Scripted and Non-fiction projects that are assessed by staff to have a high probability of securing commercial funding.
- More than four series of the same Non-fiction idea or more than six series of the same Scripted idea, except under exceptional circumstances (e.g., series with special audience and cultural appeal that maintain acceptable platform support, significant levels of third-party funding etc.) This is to create space for new ideas.
- Music applications from artists or music projects that have received three New Music Single grants (excluding Focused Rounds) or one New Music Project within a 12-month period.
- Applications from entities that are not registered in New Zealand.

## The 'how': investment principles

We will consistently use nine investment principles to guide in assessing decisions, based both on Broadcasting Act requirements and the need to manage public funds wisely.

Principle	
<b>Cultural value</b>	<p>We will prioritise songs and stories that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• contribute to our rautaki Māori</li> <li>• support a range of voices and experiences, including those of people from varying ages, races, ethnicities, abilities, genders, religions, cultures, and sexual orientations</li> <li>• effectively communicate captivating social, cultural, political, or historical aspects of Aotearoa New Zealand</li> <li>• have strong appeal to audiences who are currently under-served with local content</li> <li>• ensure that the key creative team has a deep understanding and connection to the stories and songs they wish to create.</li> </ul>
<b>Balance</b>	<p>We will continue to balance investment in content intended for both general and priority audiences, however, our primary focus is on public media content that highlights aspects of Aotearoa New Zealand that are less frequently covered in local media.</p>
<b>Risk</b>	<p>We will adopt a generous approach towards creative risk-taking and innovation in funded content while exercising caution when it comes to business risk.</p>
<b>Competition</b>	<p>We will support a range of content and creators, both to encourage multiple views and voices, and to encourage competition for the best ideas.</p>
<b>Value for money</b>	<p>We will use efficient processes and focus on cost-effective content with a reasonable shelf-life that attracts audiences of an appropriate size.</p>
<b>No duplication</b>	<p>We will invest in content and entities that add diversity to content already available and which the market alone cannot support.</p>



<b>Leverage</b>	We will invest in content and entities that attract third-party investment (for market validation and to help offset the cost to the taxpayer). Furthermore, we will strive to leverage other aspects of our mahi, such as opportunities to fund content that brings together local screen and music goals and partnering with other funding agencies where possible.
<b>Capability</b>	We will give preference to content, creators and entities that are run or supported by capable partners. This approach enables efficient monitoring while maintaining robust accountability for public funds with minimal red tape. It is unlikely that investment support will be extended to unsupported start-ups.
<b>Fairness</b>	We will require accurate, reliable information from all applicants to ensure fair and good decision-making in a contestable environment.

**In conclusion**

We hope that this paper gives you a better understanding of the mahi that we do and the vision we hold. Most of all we hope that within the strategy is a clear invitation to be more involved. We welcome your participation, and we welcome your pātai (questions) and ideas.