



Draft Tertiary Education Strategy

Targeted Consultation Response Template

WeCreate Inc

We support the submission of the NZ Writers Guild

Consultation process

This draft of the Government's new Tertiary Education Strategy (TES) is being provided for targeted consultation with sector stakeholders ahead of finalisation later in 2025.

The development of the TES has been informed by targeted engagement with a range of organisations and groups directly affected by the strategy, including tertiary education providers, industry bodies, and student and community representatives. This engagement helped shape the priorities and direction of the draft strategy.

The consultation on the draft TES builds on this earlier engagement and is intended to ensure the strategy is fit for purpose and able to guide meaningful system improvement.

Submissions process

Consultation is open for a four-week period until 5pm on Tuesday 30 September.

Feedback can be provided via:

- completing an online survey <https://education.surveymonkey.com/r/DraftTES>
- or sending written feedback tertiary.strategy@education.govt.nz

Please note that this is a targeted consultation, and the draft TES is being shared with your organisation in confidence. It can be shared for the purposes of informing your organisation's feedback on the draft TES, however, we ask that it is not circulated further without prior permission from the Ministry of Education.

Any questions you may have on the consultation process, or any other aspect of the Strategy development should also be directed to tertiary.strategy@education.govt.nz.

Privacy and publication of submissions

The information you share in this consultation is being collected to inform the content of the final TES. It will be used by the Ministry of Education, the Ministry of Business, Innovation and Employment, the Tertiary Education Commission, and the New Zealand Qualifications Authority for analysis of options and a report on the themes of submissions.

Your full submission along with your organisation name will be published on the Ministry of Education website at the end of the consultation period in line with a transparent decision-making process. If you consider that we should not publish any part of your submission, please indicate which part of your submission should not be published and why, for example for privacy or commercial sensitivity reasons.

Submissions may be subject to requests under the Official Information Act 1982, which requires the release of information unless there is good reason under the Act to withhold it. We will consult with you before releasing any information that you request not be published. If you indicate your submission should not be published, please provide us with your email address so we can contact you in the event an Official Information Act request is received in relation to your submission.

Submitter details

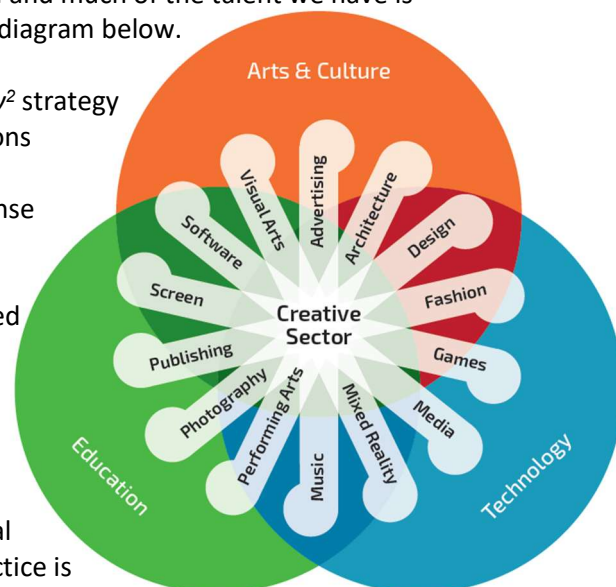
Full name	Paula Browning
Organisation name	WeCreate Inc
Organisation category (please indicate):	• Educator group • Industry • Polytechnic (including divisions of Te Pūkenga) • Private Training Establishment • Student association • University • Wānanga • Workforce Development Council • Other (please specify)
Role/position	Executive Director
Request to withhold part or all of submission	<i>Please indicate which part of your submission should not be published and why.</i>
Email address <i>For contact in response to Official Information Act request only.</i>	<i>paula@wecreate.org.nz</i>

WeCreate is the alliance of Aotearoa's major creative industry associations and organisations (representing 30,000+ Kiwi creators, support people, and creative businesses), which was founded in 2014 to propel growth in the sector and increase its contribution to New Zealand's social, cultural and economic prosperity. The creative economy contributes \$17.5b¹ to New Zealand's GDP and, with the right policy settings, could be worth \$25b by 2030. Our sector is an ecosystem and much of the talent we have is fostered in and by arts and culture organisations, as shown in the diagram below.

We draw the Ministry's attention to the Cabinet-approved *Amplify*² strategy that includes a *Nurturing Talent* pillar. There are a number of actions listed in *Amplify* that will be impacted by the choices made in the tertiary education strategy. *Amplify* is an all-of-government response to the needs of the creative and cultural sector.

In various parts of our submission, we have noted terminology used in the strategy that does not reflect our sector or our views of the tertiary education system. These include:

Employment	work is encompassing of freelancers, contractors and the self-employed
Qualifications	A portfolio of skills developed through both formal education, work-based-learning, and creative practice is equally relevant to our industry
Industry	The creative sector is large in terms of its GDP impact and employment, but it does not have the infrastructure that traditional industries (eg construction) have to enable the extent of engagement and insight provision that is envisaged in the draft strategy.



¹ [Arts and creative sector profile 2024 - Infometrics report summary](#)

² [Amplify: A Creative and Cultural Strategy for New Zealand | Manatū Taonga | Ministry for Culture & Heritage](#)

Objective and Drivers for Change questions

1. Do you have any comments on the draft objective for tertiary education?

We are pleased to see *skills* included in the objective. We note that skilling *and re-skilling* the New Zealand workforce will need to be a priority for government to ensure the country, and workers, are able to keep up with the pace of change.

WeCreate's work has always had an economic focus, and we recognise the economic emphasis in the draft objective. However, "the economy" is people – both those who work in it, and those who benefit from it. We caution narrow use of the term economy, particularly in relation to education where outcomes other than just those that are economic also have importance.

We draw your attention to a new creative sector report³ from economist Shamubeel Eaqub (commissioned by Toi Mai) that states:

"There is a persistent myth that the creative sector is low in productivity. While this appears true when measured by GDP per worker, it largely reflects inconsistent and irregular work patterns rather than low value per hour worked. When adjusted for hours worked, productivity in the sector is approximately \$346,000, comparable to the agriculture sector at \$317,000, and well above the economy-wide average of \$197,000 per full-time equivalent worker."

We believe that the objective's focus on a "high-productivity economy" risks undervaluing creative work that may not fit traditional productivity metrics but more broadly generates significant cultural and social value, in addition to economic value. Creative professionals and creative businesses are constantly innovating (generating new ideas and new products) and operate through project-based, collaborative models that create value in intellectual property and creative and cultural exports. Additionally, creative skills and knowledge underpin innovation across all sectors of the economy⁴

We have recently written to Minister Stanford in regard to school curriculum changes and drew her attention to the benefits of the STEAM⁵ approach to education. The tertiary education system has taken the traditional STEM approach but there is a strong evidence base, including from some of the world's top universities, that STEAM - where the Arts are embedded part of the learning – better prepare students for the rapidly evolving world that they will be working in. A STEAM approach would also be a step towards achieving the outcomes of the *Nurturing Talent* pillar of *Amplify*.

We support the focus on a system that delivers for Māori, Pacific peoples, the disabled and those from underserved communities. A diverse workforce is critical for the creative sector, and we need an education system that is accessible and meeting the needs of all learners.

We recommend adding explicit recognition that innovation includes cultural and creative innovation, and that quality of life encompasses cultural richness, social cohesion, and creative expression as fundamental objectives for tertiary education. The tertiary education system must also be able to respond quickly to emerging skills and industries. This is not currently the case.

The only reference to Te Tiriti in the draft strategy is in the Integration and Collaboration section. We would expect there to be a lot more explicit reference to how the legislation states the WHAT it must also express the HOW in legislation and policy to compel legislative compliance.

³ [Skills in the creative sector](#)

⁴ For example : the communications team at RocketLab, the design team at Fisher & Paykel Healthcare

⁵ [STEM vs. STEAM: Why the Arts Are Becoming Essential to Science and Tech Education in 2025](#)

2. Do you have any comments on the drivers of change in tertiary education and how the system should respond to these?

The strategy correctly identifies technological change as a key driver, particularly AI and digital tools. However, it underemphasises how these technologies are transforming work and creating new hybrid roles requiring both technical and creative skills, along with changes in business models. We submit that there should also be a balance of emphasis on skill-development and the traditional qualification model.

Tertiary education's contribution to regional development is currently under threat from the latest round of reforms of vocational education. Through the work of [CreaTer](#), which we helped to establish, WeCreate understands the realities of educators in polytechnic and private training institutions across the country. When considering this Strategy, we encourage the Ministry to take a fresh look at all parts of the tertiary education system and how they can be invested in and supported to deliver the workforce that the country needs. Innovative models are also needed and the work of organisations such as [CodeNZ](#) that connects the video games industry in Dunedin, with Otago Polytechnic and the University of Otago to help with curriculum development and provide industry-ready programmes.

The creative sector faces unique challenges that are not adequately addressed in the draft:

- **Portfolio careers:** Creative professionals increasingly work across multiple disciplines and types of employment
- **Intellectual property economy:** Growing importance of IP creation, management, and monetisation
- **Global digital platforms:** The impact of these tech companies on New Zealand's economy is understood by the creative and tech sector but is often overlooked by government. Effective government policy development in relation to these platforms is needed to ensure that New Zealanders can fairly participate in the global digital economy.

The strategy should better recognise that an effective education system is structured to deliver, in a timely manner, different approaches to work-integrated learning, entrepreneurship, internships with small creative enterprises, freelance mentorship programmes, and project-based collaborations.

We recognise the economic, social and cultural value that international students bring to New Zealand but caution any form of reliance on this source of income to prop up the tertiary education system. As we saw during the pandemic, some institutions whose business model relied too heavily on international students suffered significantly with a flow-on effect to their wider operations, including cuts to creative programmes.

Priorities for this Tertiary Education Strategy

3. Do you think the Tertiary Education Strategy should have any additional or different priorities?

Yes, we recommend adding a sixth priority: **Cultural and Creative Innovation**. This would recognise the creative sector's distinct contribution to economic development while ensuring creative disciplines receive appropriate support within the broader strategy and the system.

Alternatively, the existing priorities should be expanded to explicitly include creative sector considerations, particularly around innovation that extends beyond purely technological or scientific domains. Please refer to our comments above in regard to the STEAM approach to education.

We would also like to hear your feedback on the individual priorities for the tertiary education sector.

4. Achievement

To what extent do you agree that Achievement should be a priority in the Tertiary Education Strategy.	• Strongly agree • Agree • Neutral • Disagree • Strongly disagree
Comments Achievement in creative disciplines requires nuanced measurement approaches. Traditional completion rates may not capture the value of creative education where students often pivot between programmes, combine qualifications, or pursue alternative pathways that better suit creative career patterns. This mirrors the pattern that many will experience in their work life and it is important that this approach to measuring success is also woven through the tertiary education system.	
To what extent do you agree the expected changes and contributing activities will effectively support achievement of this priority.	• Strongly agree • Agree • Neutral • Disagree • Strongly disagree
Comments The focus on "distance travelled" measures is particularly valuable for creative students, who often enter programmes with diverse backgrounds and non-traditional educational pathways. However, employment outcomes need creative sector-specific metrics that account for freelance work, portfolio careers, and creative entrepreneurship. When looking at "employment outcomes" for student achievement, the system needs to allow for freelance and self-employment, not only the 40-hour-week for one employer that is the traditional model. This needs to be embedded at the system level, not left to individual institutions to develop.	
Do you have suggestions for additional activities to support this priority? 1) Develop creative sector-specific success measures including creative business start-ups, IP creation, and cultural participation 2) Strengthen pathways between secondary arts education and tertiary creative programmes 3) Create mentorship programmes connecting creative students with industry professionals 4) Implement flexible completion models that accommodate creative sector work patterns	

5. Economic Impact and Innovation

To what extent do you agree that Economic Impact and Innovation should be a priority in the Tertiary Education Strategy.	• Strongly agree • Agree • Neutral • Disagree • Strongly disagree
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Comments

This priority is crucial but needs explicit recognition that the creative industries are innovation drivers. The creative sector develops new business models, technologies, and approaches that influence other industries. However, the strategy's emphasis on "job-ready" graduates may not suit creative education, which often emphasises creative thinking, experimentation, and entrepreneurship over traditional employment.

We are very pleased to see the need for transferable skills acknowledged in the strategy and note that these are often learned in creative subject areas, or through the STEAM approach.

To what extent do you agree the expected changes and contributing activities will effectively support achievement of this priority.

- Strongly agree
- Agree
- **Neutral**
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree

Comments

The activities focus heavily on traditional industry partnerships but don't address the unique structure of creative and tech industries, dominated by micro-enterprises and freelancers. While more connection to industry is welcomed, the premise of this is that industry is both formed and resourced sufficiently for this type of engagement. This is particularly relevant for new and emerging industries who make take time to (or never) establish an industry body. The experience of Toi Mai in building relationships with the creative and tech sectors is informative. It takes time and consistency to build relationships with industry before a working model can be found.

We caution narrowing research investment into "national priorities". These change in regular, short cycles which can undermine investment in longer term research and also exclude research in areas that are a priority for communities and business.

We recommend that entrepreneurial education be available at secondary school level, not left until a student is at the graduate stage of learning.

It is concerning that, in the examples of contributing activities, it seems to be assumed that research only occurs in universities, and that the existing structure of the tertiary education system where university education is deemed "better", or more valued, should continue. We strongly question this assumption and would expect that in developing this new strategy, the focus should be on what New Zealand needs from tertiary education in the future, not carrying on with what has existed in the past. A system that prioritises skilling and re-skilling and life-long learning, will no doubt look very different to the one-and-done qualification for a single career.

Do you have suggestions for additional activities to support this priority?

- 1) Establish (and resource) a Creative Economy Skills Advisory Group to complement Industry Skills Boards
- 2) Develop creative entrepreneurship programmes across all tertiary levels
- 3) Enable IP commercialisation support specifically for creative graduates
- 4) Strengthen connections between creative education and creative & cultural export development
- 5) Support research into creative technologies and their applications across sectors

6. Access and Participation

To what extent do you agree that Access and Participation should be a priority in the Tertiary Education Strategy.	• Strongly agree • Agree • Neutral • Disagree • Strongly disagree
Comments We support the focus on meeting emerging workforce needs, including upskilling and retraining. Access is particularly important for creative education. Creative education can be an alternative pathway for diverse learners. However, cost barriers disproportionately affect creative students, who often cannot access student allowances due to irregular work patterns and who face additional costs for materials, equipment, and portfolio development.	
To what extent do you agree the expected changes and contributing activities will effectively support achievement of this priority.	• Strongly agree • Agree • Neutral • Disagree • Strongly disagree
Comments Some of the language and positioning of the various providers of tertiary education that we have noted above is carried on in this section. We recognise the list given is “examples” but many of these are written with context of the tertiary system structure as it currently is, not how an aspirational strategy might reimagine it. For example, it is not only universities that might partner with schools. The creative sector values the connections that polytechnics, PTEs and creative professionals and businesses sustain with schools and their learners. Regional provision is vital for creative industries, which are increasingly distributed beyond main centres. Digital distribution can make a creative career accessible to almost anyone with an internet connection. However, the strategy needs to address the unique infrastructure requirements for creative education, including specialised equipment, software, and industry connections.	
Do you have suggestions for additional activities to support this priority? 1) Develop micro-credential pathways for creative skills development 2) Create equipment and software access programmes for creative students 3) Establish regional creative hubs connecting tertiary education providers with local creative communities (this may be in partnership with the regional arts network) 4) Support flexible delivery models that accommodate creative project cycles 5) Address financial barriers specific to creative students, including materials costs and portfolio development	

7. Integration and Collaboration

To what extent do you agree that Integration and Collaboration should be a priority in the Tertiary Education Strategy.	• Strongly agree • Agree • Neutral • Disagree • Strongly disagree
Comments Collaboration is fundamental to creative practice and industry success. The creative sector's project-based, interdisciplinary nature makes it an ideal model for the collaborative approaches the strategy seeks to promote. Successful collaborations require sustained investment over time and need to be valued by the system as much as other outputs. Please note our comments in the introduction relating to industry engagement.	
To what extent do you agree the expected changes and contributing activities will effectively support achievement of this priority.	• Strongly agree • Agree • Neutral • Disagree • Strongly disagree
Comments The activities appropriately emphasise partnerships but need to recognise that creative industry partnerships often involve different models than traditional industry relationships, including project collaborations, mentorships, and community engagement rather than formal employment pathways.	
Do you have suggestions for additional activities to support this priority? 1) Develop creative cluster partnerships connecting education providers with creative precincts 2) Establish international creative exchange programmes to build global connections 3) Support iwi and Pacific creative partnerships that honour indigenous creative practices 4) Develop shared creative facilities and makerspaces across institutions	

8. International Education

To what extent do you agree that International Education should be a priority in the Tertiary Education Strategy.	• Strongly agree • Agree • Neutral • Disagree • Strongly disagree
Comments New Zealand's creative education has strong international appeal, particularly in film, design, and digital media. However, the strategy should recognise that international students in creative fields often contribute differently to the local economy through creative projects, cultural exchange, and ongoing international networks.	

How do you see this priority working with, and contributing to, the other Tertiary Education Strategy priorities?	International creative students contribute to innovation by bringing diverse perspectives and techniques. They often become cultural ambassadors for New Zealand creativity globally and create ongoing business connections. Creative education exports also enhance New Zealand's cultural diplomacy and soft power internationally.
Do you have suggestions for additional activities to support this priority?	1) Develop creative education export strategy highlighting New Zealand's unique creative strengths 2) Create alumni networks to maintain connections with international creative graduates 3) Support international collaborative projects between students and industry 4) Market New Zealand as a creative innovation destination, not just a scenic location

System Delivery

9. Do you have any comments on the roles and expectations for different parts of the tertiary education system in delivering the Tertiary Education Strategy?
- 10.

Provider or Agency Type	Comments on roles and expectations
Universities	Should strengthen creative research commercialisation and interdisciplinary programmes. Need better recognition of creative pathways and practice-based research methodologies, along with embedding the STEAM approach to learning.
Wānanga	Critical institutions for the growth of the Māori creative economy and for sustaining Mātauranga Māori curricula in tertiary and other education settings.
Polytechnics	Vital for creative industries skills training. Specialised creative facilities and equipment require more consistent investment.
Private Training Establishments (PTEs)	Often provide flexible, industry-responsive and cutting-edge creative training. Should be supported to maintain quality while serving the creative sector's diverse needs. Need recognition of their role in creative entrepreneurship development.

Industry Skills Bodies (ISBs)	Need to be as responsive to industry needs as the WDCs have been. Narrowed focus and reduced funding to ISBs over WDCs is a concern for our sector.
Relevant Government Agencies (e.g. TEC, MoE, NZQA, MBIE)	All agencies should draw on sector support to develop in-house creative sector knowledge and expertise. Funding models that are flexible and responsive to creative industry characteristics are needed. MBIE should integrate creative industries into innovation policy, in addition to traditional STEM and other emerging tech sectors.
Other (please specify)	

Monitoring Outcomes

- 11. Do you have any comments on the proposed approach to monitoring progress against the TES priorities? Please include any suggestions for how progress could be monitored, including additional indicators.**

The monitoring framework needs creative sector-specific indicators:

Achievement indicators:

- Creative business start-up rates by graduates
- Portfolio career development and sustainability
- Creative IP creation and commercialisation
- Participation in creative communities and networks

Economic Impact indicators:

- Creative export revenue generated by graduates
- Cross-sector innovation projects involving creative graduates
- Cultural and creative industry work rates
- Creative entrepreneurship success rates

Access indicators:

- Participation rates in creative education by targeted demographic groups
- Geographic distribution of creative education opportunities
- Financial accessibility of creative programmes

Integration indicators:

- Industry collaboration projects in creative fields
- Interdisciplinary creative project completion rates
- International creative partnerships and exchanges

The current focus on traditional employment outcomes may not capture the value created by creative graduates who often work as freelancers, creative entrepreneurs, or in non-traditional employment arrangements.

Final Comments

12. Do you have any other comments on the draft Tertiary Education Strategy?

WeCreate appreciates the strategy's focus on economic development and innovation. However, we encourage the Ministry to recognise that creative industries are already significant economic contributors and innovation drivers that require specific consideration within this framework.

Key recommendations:

1. **Explicit recognition** of creative industries as innovation drivers alongside technology and science
2. **Alternative governance models** for creative sector input beyond traditional Industry Skills Boards
3. **Flexible success metrics** that capture the diverse ways creative graduates contribute to the economy
4. **Investment in creative infrastructure** including specialised equipment, software, and facilities
5. **Support for creative entrepreneurship** as a distinct pathway requiring different approaches than traditional work

The strategy's success will depend on recognising that New Zealand's creative sector offers unique competitive advantages internationally and requires tailored approaches that honour both our economic potential and cultural significance.

We look forward to working with the Ministry to ensure the creative industries are effectively supported within this strategic framework and request ongoing consultation as implementation plans develop.



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