

**Submission to NZ Curriculum
The Arts and Technology Year 0-10 Learning Areas
April 2026**

BACKGROUND

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 wellbeing. The creative economy **contributes \$18.5b¹ to New Zealand’s GDP** and, with the right policy settings, could be worth \$25b by 2030. The sector has delivered 3.6% five-year per annum average growth from 2020 – 2025, while the rest of the economy only grew at 1.7%. 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 would welcome the opportunity for productive engagement with the Ministry as the curriculum change progresses. As we have with other Ministries, we can bring together our members and businesses from across the creative ecosystem to support your work and help to ensure that it meets the needs of both learners and industry, and to propel a positive future for all New Zealanders.

¹ [Infometrics sector profiles 2025 | Manatū Taonga | Ministry for Culture & Heritage](#)

Context for this submission:

1. Creative²³ and tech are **high growth industries, and those most likely to propel New Zealand’s economic prosperity**. They are also the **future-focused industries** that understand how education and work-based-learning contribute to personal and economic success.
2. **One third** of New Zealanders in creative occupations work **outside the creative sector**.
3. Creative skills, like tech skills, are needed **across the entire workforce – and this will only increase in the future**.
4. **Creative exports were valued at \$3.6 billion in 2023**. This makes creative exports Aotearoa New Zealand’s **fourth-largest export industry**, larger than fruit, and the leading non-commodity export.
5. Analysis of the economy or workforce that relies on the use of ANZSIC and ANZSOC codes **will not accurately reflect the scale and reach of the creative sector**. This coding system is acknowledged by StatsNZ as not having kept pace with the creation and adoption of digital technologies which are prevalent in the creative sector. For example, **our internationally successful games and post-production sector may be buried in “software engineering”**.
6. Cabinet has approved [*Amplify – A Creative and Cultural Strategy for New Zealand*](#). The strategy includes a **Nurturing Talent** Pillar that should be referenced as work on developing any curriculum change is completed.
7. The education and training needs of the creative, cultural, and tech sectors (including school and VET education) differ significantly from those of most other sectors. Many of **the roles in these sectors are highly digital**, and **30.3% of the workforce is self-employed** (compared to 15.5% of the rest of the workforce).
8. Prior to the establishment of Workforce Development Councils, the creative sector did not have an industry training organisation (ITO), and no workforce planning or insights. Toi Mai published a number of [*Workforce Development Plans*](#) **that should be referenced to inform changes to school curricula**.
9. Research by well-known economist, Shamubeel Eaqub, makes [*three recommendations*](#) for boosting the creative sector:
 - a. Recognise **creative skills as essential to long-term public value**.
 - b. Reform the training system to reflect real creative pathways – thinking beyond just longform qualifications.
 - c. Re-establish coordination mechanisms grounded in real conditions (not just qualification development).

² [Future of NZ Inc: What Will New Zealand Be Known for in 2050? | BCG](#)

³ [Beyond Tomorrow: Four Scenarios for the World of 2050 | BCG](#)

Submission

1. Education policy sits at the heart of WeCreate’s long-term concerns. The creative sector depends on a pipeline of skilled practitioners who are **both creatively literate AND digitally able**. The curriculum students encounter in their foundational years shapes that pipeline. For this reason, we welcome the opportunity to contribute to the consultation on the draft Years 0–10 Arts and Technology learning areas.
2. There is currently significant uncertainty in terms of what many jobs will look like as we progress further into the 21st century, and our children will, more than ever, need the skills and capacity to think outside the box with innovative and creative solutions. This is something a STEAM education, where Arts and Technology are brought together, can effectively prepare them. **STEAM education ensures that students develop the transferable skills (sometimes referred to as “soft skills”) that are needed in all industries such as innovation, teamwork, communication and collaboration.**
3. We acknowledge the intent of the curriculum refresh to provide clearer, more structured learning sequences and to reduce variability in student experience. Both the Arts and Technology drafts contain genuine strengths. However, we consider that **both learning areas, taken individually and together, fall short in preparing students for the realities of a modern creative economy**. Our key concerns are:
 - a. The creative industries are not named as a career option in either curriculum, despite being a significant and growing part of the New Zealand economy.
 - b. The convergence of creative practice and digital technologies — which defines much of the contemporary creative sector — is not reflected in either learning area, and there is no bridge between the two.
 - c. AI as a creative tool and as a force that is reshaping creative work and the entire workforce is absent from both curricula.
 - d. The disciplinary narrowing of The Arts in Years 0–8 risks weakening the talent pipeline into creative sector careers.
 - e. The implementation sequencing places both Arts and Technology last, compounding existing risks to these areas.
4. We support the cultural breadth at Years 9–10 — connecting students to New Zealand, Pacific, and global artistic contexts. **New Zealand’s unique culture and diversity are an important differentiator for taking our creativity to world audiences.**
5. The current (2007) curriculum explicitly states that specialist studies in the arts enable students to contribute to arts initiatives and creative industries. This economic framing has been removed from the draft. **WeCreate considers this a significant regression**. The creative industries are a substantial contributor to New Zealand’s economy and represent genuine career pathways for arts students. The curriculum rationale should explicitly name the creative industries as one of the outcomes that arts education supports.

6. The draft collapses Dance and Drama into a single ‘Performing Arts’ strand for Years 0–8. We are aware that Arts educators have raised serious concerns about this, noting that each discipline has a distinct body of knowledge, practice, and professional pathway. From WeCreate’s perspective, this matters because screen, theatre, and the wider performing arts industries draw on drama as a specific and irreplaceable skillset — not simply a subset of movement-based performance.
7. The early years are formative for students’ relationship with the arts. Narrowing the disciplines in this phase reduces the breadth of exposure that helps young people discover and develop their creative identities and may reduce the talent pool available to the sector in later years.
8. The four arts disciplines (Dance, Drama, Music, Visual Arts) reflect the traditional taxonomy of the arts, **which does not accommodate screen production, animation, game development, or digital content creation — all significant areas of work and employment in the New Zealand creative sector.** While music technology is a welcome addition, it is the sole acknowledgement of digital creative production in the entire Arts learning area.
9. We recognise that the Technology learning area addresses some digital skills. However, **neither learning area addresses the creative application of digital tools in an integrated way**, leaving a significant gap for students who might pursue careers in screen, games, design, or immersive media.
10. The draft Arts curriculum makes no reference to artificial intelligence — either as a tool for creative work or as a development reshaping creative industries and livelihoods. **This is a material omission.** Generative AI is already transforming how creative work is produced, commissioned, and valued. Students heading into arts-related careers need to develop critical and practical literacy around AI from their foundational years, not encounter it for the first time in employment.
11. We acknowledge strengths in the draft Technology curriculum:
 - a. The framing of students as ‘users and creators’ in a technological world is well-aligned with the skills the creative sector needs and avoids reducing technology to passive consumption.
 - b. Design thinking as a thread throughout Years 0–10 is valuable. Design — in the broad sense — is central to many creative industries, and embedding design confidence from the early years has long-term sector benefit.
 - c. The Computer Science strand at Years 9–10, with its explicit treatment of AI ethics and computational thinking, provides a meaningful foundation for students engaging with technology in complex ways.
 - d. The breadth of the strand structure at Years 9–10 — spanning materials, spatial design, digital technologies, electronics, and computer science — acknowledges that ‘technology’ is not a monolith, which is appropriate for students with diverse creative interests.
12. However, the Technology learning area rationale positions the curriculum primarily through a problem-solving and innovation lens, with implicit reference to engineering and manufacturing contexts (a traditional, and dated, approach).

Creative industries are entirely absent from the stated purposes of Technology education, despite the fact that digital production, design, music technology, games, and interactive media are major technology-dependent creative sectors in which New Zealand has an existing competitive advantage. Our creative-tech industries are earning billions in export income and their future workforce needs should be central to this curriculum work programme.

13. The draft Technology curriculum addresses AI only within the Computer Science strand at Years 9–10, framed around computational thinking and ethics. This framing is appropriate but insufficient. **AI as a creative tool — for generative visual art, music composition, writing, and design — is not addressed.** Nor is there any content about the implications of AI for creative workers: how AI is changing the labour market, what skills remain distinctly human, and how to engage with AI-assisted production critically and ethically.
14. We are very concerned that **both The Arts and Technology are the last learning areas to become compulsory** — required for Years 0–8 only from Term 1, 2028. This means they will receive the least lead time, the least investment in professional development resources, and the greatest risk of being deprioritised in schools managing multiple competing implementation demands. The creative sector depends disproportionately on these two learning areas. Placing them last in the implementation sequence sends a signal — however unintentional — that they are a lower priority. We urge the Ministry to **ensure that professional development, resourcing, and support for Arts and Technology implementation are explicitly funded and planned.**

Recommendations

1. Our primary recommendation is that **the arts and technology learning areas need to be connected** in ways that ensure learners have equitable access to developing creative and digital skills, and to the transferrable skills needed for all work and careers, ie STEAM learning. The curriculum framework — at minimum in the Te Mātaiaho overview — should acknowledge the convergence of creative and digital practice and encourage schools to develop integrated programming, particularly at Years 7–10.
2. Should the decision be made to retain separate arts and technology learning areas, we ask that:
 - a. The language in the Arts learning area restores (from 2007) the rationale that connects arts education to creative industry careers and economic participation.
 - b. Dance and Drama are reinstated as distinct strands throughout Years 0–8, with their own knowledge bases and practices clearly articulated.
 - c. visual arts and drama strands include explicit reference to screen-based, digital, and interactive storytelling contexts as legitimate sites for arts practice, at least from Years 7–10

- d. Introduce age-appropriate AI literacy within the Arts curriculum, addressing both the creative possibilities and the professional implications of AI for arts practice and creative sector work / employment.
3. Amend the Technology curriculum rationale to explicitly name the creative industries as one of the key applied domains that the learning area serves, alongside more traditional technology fields. Include guidance in the curriculum framework on the relationship between Arts and Technology, and explicitly encourage schools to develop integrated learning opportunities across these areas
4. Broaden AI content within the Technology curriculum to include AI as a creative and professional tool and introduce implications for creative work and livelihoods as part of the ethics framing.
5. Provide a dedicated implementation support plan for Arts and Technology that addresses the compressed lead-in time, with explicit funding for teacher professional development in both learning areas.

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