

Te Muka Toi, Te Muka Tākata

**The Creativity, Culture and Heritage
Strategy for the Queenstown Lakes District**

**Rīpoata ā-tau Annual Report
2024-2025**



Te Muka Toi, Te Muka Tākata

The unbreakable thread connecting creativity and humanity.

Te Muka Toi, Te Muka Tākata is the Queenstown Lakes District's Creativity, Culture & Heritage Strategy and the thread that connects creativity and community, past and future, identity and place. The name comes from muka, the inner fibre of harakeke: strong and enduring.

In Kāi Tahu tradition, muka symbolises the connection between the physical and spiritual worlds, and between people and the places they live.

Photo credit: Deanna Gerlach

**Our mauka stand as taoka,
holding the histories, identities,
and connections of this place.**



Rāraki Upoko

Contents

Te Whakatakika Introduction.....	6
Mānawa Kāi Tahu Kāi Tahu Outcomes	7
Tāhuhu Kōrero Background	8
Moemoeā Vision.....	9
Mahi Tahi Working Together.....	10
Te Kaupapa o tēnei Pūrongo Purpose of this Report.....	11
Kā Whakaarotau ā-Rautaki Strategic Priorities.....	12
He tirohaka whānui ō te Rautaki Snapshot of Strategic Framework.....	14
Kā Pou Rautaki Progress by Strategic Pou	15
Ineka Akitū Success Measures.....	32
Titiro ki Anamata Looking Ahead.....	39
Whai Wāhi ā-Hapori Community Engagement.....	42
Appendix 1	43
Kuputaka Glossary	44
Kupu Te Reo Glossary	46
Appendix 2	47
Te Horopaki o te Rautaki Strategic Context.....	48



**Ehara taku toa i te toa
takitahi, he toa takitini
My strength is not as an
individual, but as a collective**

Te Muka Toi, Te Muka Tākata Hui Workshop,
Photo credit: Deanna Gerlach

Kupu Whakataki

Introduction

Te Muka Toi, Te Muka Tākata, the Queenstown Lakes Creative, Culture and Heritage Strategy, was endorsed in June 2024, with unanimous support from Queenstown Lakes District Council (QLDC) elected members. Shaped through community hui, creative voices, and the guidance of Kāi Tahu as tākata whenua, it sets a clear direction: creativity, culture, and heritage are central to who we are, how we belong and how we shape a thriving, resilient district.

This is a strategy shaped by people and place. It recognises Kāi Tahu's deep and enduring connection to this land, honours the richness of our diverse communities, and celebrates the creative talent that makes Queenstown Lakes distinctive and future-ready.

A partnership model is now in motion, one that raises the profile of creativity, connects people and organisations, and champions creativity, culture and heritage as essential to the district's future.

The Three Lakes Cultural Trust (TLCT), as the district's Regional Arts Organisation, has taken responsibility for moving this work forward - in collaboration with Queenstown Lakes District Council, Kāi Tahu, the Lakes District Museum and Gallery, local cultural organisations, Regional Tourism Organisations, and the wider creative community.

In 2024–2025 we have moved from vision to action. Together, we've delivered the first wave of projects, set benchmarks for success, and built the relationships that will sustain this kaupapa and carry it forward with clear direction.

What follows in this report is not the work of any single organisation, but the emergence of a cultural ecosystem, one that is beginning to shape how we tell our stories, care for our heritage, strengthen our communities, and share with the world a district that is as confident in its future as it is connected to its past.

“Te Muka Toi, Te Muka Tākata marks the beginning of long-term change and a future shaped by creativity, culture, and connection”.

Annis Somerville Deputy Chair: TLCT (Waitaha, Kāti Māmoe, Kāi Tahu)

Note: This report uses 'k' in place of 'ng' except where an official name, place, or entity retains 'ng'. This reflects the unique linguistic character of the Kāi Tahu dialect and honours its place in our district's identity.

Mānawa Kāi Tahu

Kāi Tahu Outcomes

We acknowledge Kā Rūnaka: Te Rūnaka o Moeraki, Kāti Huirapa Rūnaka ki Puketeraki, Te Rūnanga o Ōtākou, Hokonui Rūnanga, Te Rūnanga o Awarua, Ōraka Aparima Rūnanga, and Waihōpai Rūnanga. Kāi Tahu have a deep and enduring connection to the Queenstown Lakes District. Whakatipu-Wai-Māori, Wānaka, and Hāwea are iconic lakes of cultural and statutory significance. The contemporary presence of Kāi Tahu in the Queenstown Lakes centres on wise use, restoration and protection of the natural environment, incorporation of design elements into the physical environment that reflect mātauraka and Kāi Tahu associations, and an active role for Kāi Tahu in development opportunities.

The Queenstown Lakes Spatial Plan identifies ten key outcomes important to Kāi Tahu. The key outcomes supported by the Creativity, Culture and Heritage Strategy include:

▶ Kāi Tahu histories and cultural associations are visible providing cultural connection

▶ Economic opportunities provide for Kāi Tahu including through social procurement practice

▶ Cultural practices are supported and mahika kai access increased

▶ Wāhi Tūpuna and taonga are identified, protected and restored

▶ Mātauraka and Kāi Tahu policy guide development

▶ Active Treaty partnership leads planning and implementation with funding support

▶ Kāi Tahu whānau can afford to live and work in the district

Te Muka Toi, Te Muka Tākata the Creativity, Culture and Heritage Strategy has been developed with the guidance of Kāi Tahu, ensuring its actions are grounded in shared values and outcomes. This bicultural approach was reflected in Te Muka Toi Te Muka Tākata hui, which opened with Kāi Tahu leadership and wove whakapapa, mātauraka, and cultural identity throughout the programme. The strategy honours our role as Treaty partners, supports Te Ao Māori, and celebrates Kāi Tahutaka as central to the district's cultural and creative future.

Tāhuhu Kōreroi

Background

Te hiranga o tēnei rautaki
Why this strategy matters

The Queenstown Lakes District has always been alive with creativity, from Kāi Tahu stories carried across generations to the historic traces of early innovators still visible in our landscape.

Today, that same spirit thrives in our world-class festivals, galleries, artists, and makers, who bring creativity to life in ways that connect us locally and inspire audiences globally. As the district continues to evolve, so too has the call for a more connected, strategic approach to creativity, culture, and heritage. Te Muka Toi, Te Muka Tākata was developed in response to that call.

Through hui and conversations from Glenorchy to Arrowtown, Kingston, Queenstown, Cardrona, Wānaka and Hāwea, people spoke about the need to protect taoka before they are lost, to create places where everyone belongs, to support young people, and to recognise culture and creativity as central to how we grow.

Te Muka Toi, Te Muka Tākata responds to the challenges of our time, rapid population growth, climate pressures, a reliance on the visitor economy, and the impact these place on identity, belonging, and community wellbeing. It also reflects an opportunity: to harness creativity as a driver of resilience, innovation, and economic diversity.

At its heart, Te Muka Toi, Te Muka Tākata is about safeguarding identity, carrying forward heritage, and embedding creativity as a foundation for the district's future.

A place isn't just where people live, it's where they belong. When people feel connected to each other and their place, communities are stronger.

The actions within this report reflect a clear community message: protect what makes this place special, create spaces of belonging, and place creativity, culture, and heritage at the centre of our future.

In a fast-changing landscape, this approach ensures progress is thoughtful, inclusive, and rooted in identity. It champions local stories, skills, spaces, and voices because that's where resilience starts.

Most importantly, it gives us the tools to shape our own future, one built on creativity, culture, connection, and pride in place.

“This is about more than the arts. It's about connection, resilience, and shaping a future that reflects all of us in a fast-changing district.”

Queenstown Lakes District Mayor Glyn Lewers



Moemoeā Vision

A district where the culture and stories of mana whenua and the rich diversity of our communities are visible, heard, and celebrated. Where creativity, culture and heritage are woven into our everyday lives—valued, supported, and thriving.

At the World's Edge Festival, Photo credit: Nat Symonds

Mahi Tahī

Working Together

In 2024–2025 we've focused on a new way of working. One that puts people and place at the centre, values creativity as essential, and builds shared momentum across the district. As the Regional Arts Organisation (RAO), Three Lakes Cultural Trust's leadership, vision, coordination, and investment in this vision have been central to advancing the Creativity, Culture & Heritage Strategy. Working in close partnership with QLDC, Kāi Tahu, local funders, cultural organisations, and the creative community, strategic priorities have turned into meaningful collaborations and initiatives across the district.

Te Muka Toi, Te Muka Tākata draws its strength from this foundation, bringing together the voices, skills, and resources of communities, practitioners, tākata whenua, council, funders, and sector organisations such as the Lakes District Museum and Gallery, Te Atamira, and Film Queenstown Lakes, while building on the decades of work by our heritage societies, arts collectives, community festivals and cultural events that have long enriched the district - into a shared vision for the future.

TABLE OF KEY ORGANISATIONS

RAO	Regional Arts Organisation - Three Lakes Cultural Trust
QLDC	Queenstown Lakes District Council
LDM	Lakes District Museum and Gallery
TGDSST	Tāhuna Glenorchy Dark Sky Sanctuary Project Management Team
KDSPT	Kawarau Dark Skies Park Project Management Team
RTOs	Regional Tourism Organisations
TA	Te Atamira
Kāhui Tuawhenua	Rūnaka-led Inland working group
Film QL	Film Queenstown Lakes

Te Kaupapa o tēnei Pūrongo

Purpose of this Report

Progress you can see and setting the direction for what comes next.

This Annual Report is designed to show both what has been achieved in 2024-2025 and what we are building on for the future.

In this first year, the focus is on actions delivered, relationships built, and the momentum that's taking shape across the district.

The report brings this to life through:

- ▶ **Snapshots of progress in each Strategic Pou** - highlighting achievements and connections
- ▶ **Evidence and examples** - from workshops and partnerships to community stories and events
- ▶ **Early indicators** - the starting points we'll track consistently in the years ahead

This approach makes achievements of the first year visible, while setting the framework for consistent measurement and evaluation in the years ahead.

Kā Whakaarotau ā-Rautaki

Strategic Priorities

Kei hea mātou ināianei
Where are we now

Queenstown Lakes is recognised as Aotearoa, New Zealand's second most creative district¹. A place where imagination, identity, and innovation fuel the way we live, work, and connect. Te Muka Toi, Te Muka Tākata is about strengthening and sustaining that creativity, so it shapes our economy, our communities, and our future.

In 2024–2025 we've been turning intent into action. Governance is evolving to better reflect the voices of our communities, workshops have given local organisations and practitioners the tools to grow with confidence, and planning is underway for the creative spaces and infrastructure that will carry us forward. Alongside this, renewed funding streams and a new portal are making support more accessible than ever.

Creative and cultural hubs are attracting unprecedented participation, with festivals drawing record crowds. These events are world-class in calibre yet deeply rooted in community, engaging youth through school programmes,

captivating new audiences, and welcoming nationally and internationally renowned performers and speakers. The newly opened School House Studios in Queenstown providing another dedicated space for local artists and practitioners and enriching the district's creative scene.

Bold, innovative projects sit alongside heritage-rich gatherings that honour the past. Together, these initiatives are shaping a distinctive cultural identity and redefining how people experience and connect with the Queenstown Lakes District.

Stories are reaching further than ever. Te Wāhi Toi has hosted over 2,000 listings and sends curated, regular newsletters to its subscriber base with over 100,000 newsletters delivered in 2024–2025. Destination Queenstown and Lake Wānaka Tourism are amplifying these stories across domestic and international markets, extending the reach and richness of our cultural identity as a region.

¹ Stats NZ/Infometrics data (2023) identifies Queenstown Lakes as the second most creative district in Aotearoa, based on percentage of workforce employed in creative industries.

This year has been about celebrating what matters most - our people, places, and stories. Glenorchy gained international recognition as Aotearoa, New Zealand's fourth Dark Sky Sanctuary, new heritage projects and oral histories brought taoka to life, and our first flagship hui gathered more than 400 people to connect, share, and build capacity. Across Queenstown and Wānaka, regular arts hui are growing networks, while workshops, residencies, and training are giving creatives the confidence to thrive and inspiring our rakatahi.

Creativity is stepping more firmly into the economy. At the inaugural Te Muka Toi, Te Muka Tākata Creativity & Cultural Hui, the Creative Showcase brought together designers, makers, and storytellers from across the district, highlighting the depth of talent and sparking new collaborations. Remarkable Studios, launched by Screentime New Zealand, has a solid pipeline of local screen production work confirmed, adding real momentum to the sector. Film workshops, on-set training placements, and a new Documentary Accelerator are opening career pathways in screen. Mapping of the creative economy has begun, giving us the first clear picture of its scale, while scoping of emerging technologies signals even bigger opportunities ahead.



He tirohaka whānui ō te Rautaki

Snapshot of Strategic Framework



The following pages show progress across each Pou in 2024- 2025.

Paparahi Foundations

Strategic Goal:

Establish governance, partnerships and funding foundations for delivery. Together, these steps build the governance and foundations needed for long-term delivery.

ACTIONS	LEAD AGENCIES	QLDC OUTCOMES	PROGRESS
Establish a regular forum with Kāi Tahu to ensure mana whenua aspirations remain integral to the implementation of the Creativity, Culture and Heritage Strategy.	Kāhui Tuawhenua, QLDC, RAO	Community	Kāi Tahu voices have shaped this strategy from its earliest stages and continue to guide its delivery.
RAO Board to transition governance model to provide district wide, creative, cultural and heritage sector representation.	RAO	Community	Steps are underway to strengthen and diversify Board representation. Including QLDC representation and stronger inclusion of the district's creative, cultural, and heritage sectors.
Develop relationships with national policy bodies that have multi-year funding commitments.	RAO, QLDC	Community	Building strong relationships with national policy bodies and progressing applications with Creative NZ and other national funders.
Undertake a review of all potential mechanisms and sustainable funding models that can drive income for the creativity, culture and heritage sector.	RAO, QLDC	Community	CCS & CLASS (arts funding) renewed (3 years); TLCT funding page launched; Workshops delivered. Wider funding framework review planned for FY2026.

“Infrastructure isn’t just roads and buildings, it’s also the cultural frameworks and protocols that sustain healthy creative ecosystems. When creativity is grounded in whenua and cultural integrity, it strengthens communities, builds resilience, and creates long-term value for both people and place.”

Dr. Alayna Ra



Ō mātou kōrero paki

Our stories

Strategic Goal:

Support identity, storytelling, and community-led cultural programming. These initiatives make local creativity more visible and strengthen the district's cultural identity.

ACTIONS	LEAD AGENCIES	QLDC OUTCOMES	PROGRESS
Develop a compelling identity that is truly reflective of this place and our people, including creative place branding and authentic storytelling.	RTO, RAO, QLDC	People, Community	Destination Queenstown will work with Kāi Tahu to undertake dedicated research (Place DNA is an internationally respected research process, undertaken by Destination Think), which will support work to develop a new place brand for Queenstown that reflects local values, cultural history and stories of our place. To be delivered 2025-2026.
Undertake a review of current events policy	QLDC	People, Community	Adopted June 2025. Events handbook scheduled for release.
Support and amplify Te Wāhi Toi	RAO	People, Community	Te Wāhi Toi has hosted over 2,000 listings, with over 100,000 newsletters distributed.

ACTIONS	LEAD AGENCIES	QLDC OUTCOMES	PROGRESS
Work with the Regional Tourism Offices to identify opportunities to celebrate and champion our creativity, cultural and heritage experiences better.	RAO, RTO	People, Community	Arts and culture storytelling is gaining traction across the district's destination platforms. In 2024–2025, DQ and LWT published 10 blogs, delivered 57 organic social posts reaching over 448K users, and launched targeted digital campaigns reaching 151K+. Content was also regularly featured in visitor newsletters, growing visibility for local events, experiences, and cultural identity.
Develop a district-wide communications, engagement and education plan to provide opportunities to tell our story better. A plan that profiles local innovators, creatives, and heritage and celebrates the diversity of our district.	RAO	People, Community	Joint newsletters and initial comms agreements are underway. Work continues with QLDC, TLCT, LDM and RTO partners to formalise a district-wide communications, engagement, and education plan for FY2026.
Explore innovative ways to highlight the creativity and cultural vibrancy of the district.	RAO	People, Community	Cultural vibrancy highlighted through Te Wāhi Toi, Open Studios, newsletters, and creative video content, with further amplification planned via QLDC comms campaigns and digital tools in FY2026.
Develop guidelines and ways of working together for interpretive wayfinding signage to ensure effective storytelling and provide greater visibility for venues and heritage sites.	QLDC	People, Place	Initial discussions with Kāi Tahu and heritage partners underway; interpretive wayfinding signage guidelines to be developed in FY2027–2028.



\$34m

Contributed to the Queenstown Lakes economy, reflecting its growing role alongside tourism and other key industries

Sourced from Infometrics NZ, for Queenstown Lakes District



5.64%



Of the workforce in Queenstown Lakes is employed in creative industries. Second only to Wellington in Aotearoa, New Zealand

Sourced from Infometrics NZ, for Queenstown Lakes District



59%



Of survey respondents attended or participated in a cultural event - a significant increase from 2023

Sourced from the QLDC Quality of Life Survey 2024 results

Wāhi Taoka

Treasured spaces

Strategic Goal:

Support identity, storytelling, and community-led cultural programming. These initiatives make local creativity more visible and strengthen the district's cultural identity.

ACTIONS	LEAD AGENCIES	QLDC OUTCOMES	PROGRESS
Work with tākata whenua and mana whenua to develop a clear and shared understanding of the district's cultural taoka as a cultural values map.	QLDC	Place, People	Early engagement underway through initial discussions with Kāi Tahu and museum partners. Ongoing collaboration in FY2026 will guide development of a shared cultural values map.
Ensure ongoing heritage networking to understand community aspirations and set direction for heritage management.	QLDC	Place, People	Heritage networking strengthened through the inaugural Heritage Partners Hui, collaboration with Upper Clutha, and regular QLDC partner communications. Additional heritage partners hui will take place, and planning will commence for a district Heritage Festival.
Review existing capabilities and capacities across QLDC relating to heritage, creativity and culture to ensure decision making processes effectively manage all identified heritage values, places, items and landscapes.	QLDC	Place, People	Heritage asset mapping completed and internal champions identified. A review of QLDC Heritage Incentive Grant criteria is planned for FY2026, followed by heritage-related staff capabilities and staff upskilling in FY2027.

ACTIONS	LEAD AGENCIES	QLDC OUTCOMES	PROGRESS
Support Dark Sky projects in the district that align to heritage values through their capacity to connect with and preserve access to mātauraka; to connect with and learn from celestial bodies and the stars in the same way that those who came before us saw and experienced the skies as a source of important cultural knowledge.	TGDSST, KDSPT	Place, People	Tāhuna Glenorchy achieved Dark Sky Sanctuary status in 2025. Community-led initiatives now include culturally aligned projects such as a proposed inland star compass, Matariki moth diary, and outreach events blending science, mātauraka Māori, and environmental education.
Develop a public engagement plan for the district's heritage that will increase awareness, appreciation and stewardship of the area.	LDM	Place, People	A dedicated heritage engagement plan will be developed in FY2026.
Promote and support recognition for heritage, both tangible and intangible, that enables residents and visitors to deepen their experience of this place.	LDM	Place, People	Recognition advanced through Dark Sky Sanctuary status in Glenorchy, new heritage signage in the Upper Clutha, oral history projects, and broader heritage promotion. Further initiatives are planned for FY2025–2026.
Facilitate an annual hui for heritage groups and agencies district-wide to ensure an active and ongoing dialogue to protect heritage values, places, items and landscapes.	LDM	Place, People	Inaugural Heritage Partners Hui delivered; two hui per year scheduled from FY2026.
Support further development of district-wide oral histories project to preserve and share the stories of our diverse communities.	LDM	Place, People	Upper Clutha oral history work underway; contemporary oral history project planned for FY2026.

**“In February 2025,
Tāhuna Glenorchy was
declared Aotearoa’s
fourth official Dark
Sky Sanctuary. This
initiative exemplifies
how creative, place-
based approaches
can honour heritage,
protect ecology, and
strengthen identity-
all under the stars.”**

Dr. Leslie Van Gelder

The Milky Way above the Humbolt Range, Glenorchy,
Photo credit: Corrine Davis

Uru kahika

Supportive connections

Strategic Goal:

Support identity, storytelling, and community-led cultural programming. These initiatives make local creativity more visible and strengthen the district's cultural identity.

ACTIONS	LEAD AGENCIES	QLDC OUTCOMES	PROGRESS
Undertake a review to understand how creativity, culture and heritage impact the community across a range of wellbeing indicators.	RAO, QLDC	People, Community	QLDC review underway to assess creativity, culture and heritage impacts against wellbeing outcomes, with input from RAO and alignment to the Quality of Life survey.
Review Queenstown Lakes District Art in Public Places Policy.	QLDC	People, Community	Partnership established with Lakes District Arts Trust to support development of updated policy.
Foster connection and collaboration to support a vibrant and diverse events offering that is coordinated across the district, highlighting the creativity, culture and heritage sector.	RAO	People, Community	Supported through monthly arts hui in Queenstown, new Creatives of Wānaka meetings, and Open Studios at the hui. Further coordination planned to strengthen the district's creative and cultural events offering in FY2026.
Deliver an annual forum/summit.	RAO	People, Community	Te Muka Toi, Te Muka Tākata hui successfully delivered in 2025 as the district's flagship creativity and culture event, bringing together artists, iwi, industry, and community. Planning is underway for the 2026 hui in June.

ACTIONS	LEAD AGENCIES	QLDC OUTCOMES	PROGRESS
Develop and deliver an outreach programme through Te Atamira for arts, culture and creativity for the district's smaller communities.	Te Atamira	People, Community	Te Atamira took two performances to Glenorchy, extending arts, culture, and creativity opportunities to one of the district's smaller communities. Expanded programmes planned for FY2026.
Promoting accessibility and active travel options for creativity, culture and heritage events district-wide.	Collective	People, Community	Promotion will continue in FY2026 through collaboration with key events, QLDC, and Arts Access Aotearoa . Including integration of accessibility questions into Te Wāhi Toi and planned guest speaker sessions.



“Te Muka Toi, Te Muka Tākata Hui was the first event of its kind in Queenstown Lakes. Over four days, creatives, cultural leaders, innovators, producers, businesses and organisations came together to connect, collaborate, and elevate the conversation around creativity.”

Ann Lockhart Chair TLCT

The Power and Value of the Creative Economy -
Opening Session of the Te Muka Toi, Te Muka Tākata
Hui, Photo credit: Deanna Gerlach

Te Pukeka

Training and skills

Strategic Goal:

Support capacity-building for creatives and organisations.

ACTIONS	LEAD AGENCIES	QLDC OUTCOMES	PROGRESS
Understand the needs and deliver a district-wide capability programme to support creative practitioners to be sustainable and thriving.	RAO	People, Economy	Needs identified via hui surveys, huddl's Community Greatest Needs assessment, and shared sector data. Delivered 7 Funding Series, 4 Creative Rights/Artists' Resale Royalty workshops, and 8 hui capability-building sessions. Expanded district-wide programme planned for FY2025–2026.
Develop residencies and exchange programmes	RAO	People, Community	Early scoping of opportunities underway through Te Muka Toi, Te Muka Tākata hui and sector hui discussions. Residency and exchange programme development planned for FY2026.
Create opportunities for creative industries, professional networking opportunities and knowledge sharing.	RAO, QLDC	People, Community	QLDC supported Deep South Design Summit a celebration of creativity, community, and connection.

ACTIONS	LEAD AGENCIES	QLDC OUTCOMES	PROGRESS
Review existing policy and supporting documents to ensure they meet the regulatory requirements for protecting and conserving heritage values, places, items and landscapes. To include clear process and protocol for managing archaeological discoveries and contemporary taoka.	QLDC	People, Community	Review of heritage grant scope and criteria underway in FY2026, with QLDC commencing work on heritage guidelines in FY2027. Wider conservation policies and protocols to be updated in FY2027.
Develop a programme of capability building to grow the governance and management capacity of creativity, culture and heritage organisations.	RAO, QLDC	People, Community	Governance capability needs identified through sector engagement have led to a partnership with huddl, which supports and strengthens community groups, charitable organisations, and networks in the Queenstown Lakes. TLCT promotes huddl's existing governance programmes through Te Wāhi Toi and other channels to extend their reach across the sector.
Support digital technology uptake in the creative community	RAO, QLDC	People, Community	Trials of the Story app, and development of online forums via TLCT. Further digital tools to be introduced in FY2026.



“Thank you for creating this space. It’s invaluable professional development for creatives who rarely get time to step back and connect.”

Hui participant survey response 2025

Artist Nat Tozer - Unlocking Creative Potential Through
Collaboration Session Hui 2025, Photo Credit: Deanna Gerlach

Auahataka

Creativity and innovation

Strategic Goal:

Strengthen creative industries and innovation pathways. Creativity is starting to take its place in the district's future planning.

ACTIONS	LEAD AGENCIES	QLDC OUTCOMES	PROGRESS
Investigate the need for a support network for small creative businesses and entrepreneurs.	RAO	People, Community	A new 'Build Your Network' page was added to the TLCT website to encourage wider sector connection. Sector engagement and hui feedback are informing the scoping of a creative business support network planned for FY2026.
Support more 'home-grown' content in the film, screen and digital media sector, increasing the scale and value of the local sector.	QLDC	Community, Place	Film Queenstown Lakes supported three industry workshops (screenwriting, directing, adventure film), delivered three on-set training placements, and drafted a district profile and plan to position Queenstown Lakes as an Outdoor and Adventure Filmmaking Hub. A new Documentary Accelerator programme (Film Otago Southland/Short Film Otago) is set to launch in late 2025/early 2026.

ACTIONS	LEAD AGENCIES	QLDC OUTCOMES	PROGRESS
Establish a programme of work to understand the wider opportunities within associated digital and emerging technologies, including media innovation, through to the film industry.	RAO		Opportunities being scoped through sector hui and Economic Futures engagement, with links to media innovation and film industry development to be advanced in FY2026.
Map size and potential of creative economy	RAO	Community, Place	Baseline data collection underway through sector engagement and Economic Futures connections; mapping of the creative economy, including remote workers, to be advanced in FY2026.
Showcase and tell the story of our creative sector to inspire economic development opportunities.	RAO	Community, Place	Product design expo held at the Workshop as part of Te Muka Toi, Te Muka Tākata Hui. With over 200 attended including schools from Wānaka, Queenstown and Central Otago.

A wooden signpost stands in a field of tall, dry grass. The sign is made of light-colored wood and has the text 'THE WORKSHOP' at the top, with 'Event this way' below it. The background shows a misty, mountainous landscape under a cloudy sky.

“The Creative Showcase at The Workshop showed the strength of Queenstown Lakes’ innovation community and gave us a platform to share projects that push creative frontiers.”

Amos Breyfogle

The Creative Showcase at The Workshop - Hui 2025,
Photo Credit: Deanna Gerlach

Ineka Akitū

Success Measures

Kapēheae haurapa i tōmātoukauneke
How we will track our progress

This is a benchmark year. Some measures are already in place, while others such as sector sustainability, community sentiment, and cultural impact will take time to build.

To track progress in meaningful ways, we have developed KPIs aligned to the strategic objectives of the Te Muka Toi, Te Muka Tākata strategy. These reflect what matters most to our communities: belonging, access to creativity, connection to place, and economic opportunity.

The RAO, with Strategy partners, has established this monitoring and evaluation framework that will evolve alongside the strategy. It provides regular updates and transparent reporting to QLDC, the Grow Well Whaiaora Steering Group, and the wider community, ensuring progress is visible, outcomes are clear, and impact is understood over time.

Drawing on trusted sources such as the QLDC Quality of Life Survey, RTO visitor insights, and RAO surveys, the framework links directly to QLDC's broader community outcomes. It ensures we are not just counting activity, but tracking who is engaged, what is changing, and how creativity is shaping the district's cultural, social, and economic life.

“Creativity is recognised worldwide as essential to who we are, how we grow, and what we value. Strengthening it builds confidence, deepens connection, and drives economic resilience. The very outcomes we’re committed to tracking and measuring.”

Olivia Egerton Former Director Te Atamira.

Paparahi Foundations

Strategy Area

The Foundations Pou establishes the base structures, governance, and funding mechanisms to support creativity, culture, and heritage across the district. Measures here track representation, funding access, and planning for creative infrastructure.

KPI	NOW (2025-2026)	NEAR (2027-2030)	FUTURE (UNTIL 2034)	QLDC OUTCOME	DATA SOURCE
Representation of Kāi Tahu and heritage voices in governance	Kāi Tahu representation on RAO Board	Ongoing Kāi Tahu participation in governance and regular cultural advisory hui in place	Sustained Kāi Tahu presence and partnership embedded	People, Community	Board composition records / governance register
Funding ecosystem support	TLCT funding page launched; 7x Funding Series workshops delivered (2025)	Grow access and uptake by 20% with increased reach into under-represented groups.	Sustained and equitable funding access across the district	Community	TLCT Funding Portal analytics, workshop attendance records, RAO/ sector surveys
% of implementation actions in progress	80% (Year One baseline established via Implementation Plan analysis)	≥85% actions on track annually	≥85% sustained through to 2030	Community	Steering Group tracker
Creative infrastructure planning	Creative Spaces Project underway (2025); baseline spaces identified	Research and investment plan completed to guide future creative infrastructure	New and revitalised creative spaces embedded as part of the district's long-term planning and growth	People, Place, Community	QLDC infrastructure planning reports, sector feedback

Ō mātou kōrero paki

Our Stories

Strategy Area

Our Stories Pou is about celebrating local identity, participation, and storytelling. KPIs measure belonging, cultural identity, resident and visitor satisfaction, and participation in cultural experiences.

KPI	NOW (2025-2026)	NEAR (2027-2030)	FUTURE (UNTIL 2034)	QLDC OUTCOME	DATA SOURCE
Residents who feel a strong connection to culture	43% (QLDC QoL Survey 2024)	45%	≥50%	Community, People	QLDC Quality of Life Survey
Residents satisfied with celebration of Māori culture	32% (QLDC QoL Survey 2024)	40%	≥50%	Community, People	QLDC Quality of Life Survey
Resident participation in creative/cultural events	59% (QLDC QoL Survey 2024)	65%	≥75%	Community, People	QLDC Quality of Life Survey
Visitor satisfaction with cultural authenticity or experience depth	Visitors who strongly agreed that there were opportunities to learn about the local culture and heritage ZQN: 19% WKA: 11%	District average 20%	District average ≥25%	Community, Place	DQ Visitor Insights
Visitor participation in cultural experiences	Cultural or heritage experiences ZQN: 13% WKA: 5% Visited art galleries, museums or historic buildings/sites ZQN: 21% WKA: 14%	District average 18%	District average ≥20%+	People, Place	DQ Visitor Insights

Wāhi Taoka

Treasured Spaces

Strategy Area

The Treasured Spaces Pou focuses on protecting, activating, and promoting the district's heritage and cultural taoka. Measures track resident satisfaction with heritage, visibility, and activation of cultural spaces.

KPI	NOW (2025-2026)	NEAR (2027-2030)	FUTURE (UNTIL 2034)	QLDC OUTCOME	DATA SOURCE
# of heritage and wāhi taoka sites activated annually	5+ in 2025	Maintain/grow to 6–7 annually	10+	Place, Community – protecting and celebrating heritage, strengthening community identity	QLDC, Heritage partners
Residents satisfied with preservation of heritage assets	Natural heritage 42% and historic buildings and sites 41% (QLDC QoL Survey 2024)	Year-on-year improvement, aiming for ≥45% by 2027	>50%	People, Community, Place (heritage protection and visibility)	QLDC Quality of Life Survey

Uru kahika

Supportive Connections

Strategy Area

Supportive Connections Pou reflects the importance of collaboration, inclusivity, and community voice. KPIs measure belonging, collaboration across the sector, and participation by under-represented groups.

KPI	NOW (2025-2026)	NEAR (2027-2030)	FUTURE (UNTIL 2034)	QLDC OUTCOME	DATA SOURCE
Delivery of the annual creativity and culture hui (Te Muka Toi Te Muka Tākata)	First hui delivered with strong participation and sector recognition	Annual hui sustained and growing in scale, reach, and influence (regional + national attendance)	Flagship national event recognised for advancing creativity, culture, and heritage, with international connections established	People, Community, Economy	Event delivery reports, attendance data, sector feedback surveys, media coverage
Residents who feel a sense of belonging	51% (QLDC QoL Survey 2024)	+5% increase (56%)	≥65% by 2030	People, Community	QLDC Quality of Life Survey
Residents who feel they can express their culture	57% (QLDC QoL Survey 2024)	60%	≥65%	People, Community	QLDC Quality of Life Survey
Participation by under-represented groups	Baseline to be established FY25/26 (RAO surveys)	+10% by Year 3	Equitable access across district	People, Community equitable access and participation	RAO surveys

Te Pūkeka

Training & Skills

Strategy Area

Training & Skills Pou is about building capability and confidence among creative practitioners. KPIs track access to workshops and professional development, and practitioner confidence over time.

KPI	NOW (2025-2026)	NEAR (2027-2030)	FUTURE (UNTIL 2034)	QLDC OUTCOME	DATA SOURCE
Creative practitioners' confidence and capability	Baseline to be established FY2026 (RAO survey)	By 2027, practitioners report improved access to professional pathways and creative networks	Sustained growth	People, Community Skilled practitioners and resilient sector	RAO sector survey
Access to professional development opportunities	Funding Series + workshops baseline (2025)	At least 6 workshops annually	Ongoing sector-wide access	People, Economy Increased access to skills development and professional pathways	RAO tracker

Auahataka

Creativity & Innovation

Strategy Area

Creativity & Innovation Pou highlights the role of creativity in driving economic diversification and innovation. Measures track creative sector employment and long-term sustainability.

KPI	NOW (2025-2026)	NEAR (2027-2030)	FUTURE (UNTIL 2034)	QLDC OUTCOME	DATA SOURCE
Employment in creative industries	5.64% of workforce (Infometrics, 2023)	6.2%	7%+ of workforce	Economy, People diversified economy and skilled workforce	Infometrics, RAO survey
Delivery of screen sector development initiatives (e.g., workshops, masterclasses, short courses, training placements)	Minimum of 3 initiatives delivered annually (baseline 2025)	Sustained delivery of ≥3 initiatives per year, with growing participation	Embedded annual programme delivering ≥3 initiatives with consistently high participation and recognised by industry as a key regional talent pipeline	People, Economy – growing capability and creative employment pathways	Film Queenstown Lakes
Annual production activity. Number of productions, shoot days, and production types	Baseline to be established (Film Otago Southland 2025 report)	Positive upward trend in volume and/or spend	≥30% increase in local spend from baseline	Economy – creative industries as a diversification driver	Film Queenstown Lakes, Film Otago Southland

Titiro ki Anamata Looking Ahead

Te Anamata Auaha o tō tātou Takiwā
The creative future of our district

I oreā te tuatara ka patu ki waho
A problem is solved by continuing to find solutions

Creative communities here and around the world face shared challenges: under-resourcing, shrinking public funding, lack of sector visibility, uneven access, and the struggle to earn sustainable incomes. In Aotearoa, New Zealand, many creatives report incomes well below national standards and ongoing pressure to diversify income streams.*

But a shift is underway. Around the world, councils and governments are recognising that creativity, culture, and heritage are not just entertainment, they are strategic assets that drive social cohesion, innovation, stronger economies, and support climate resilience.

Cities and towns around the globe are investing in culture as seriously as transport or housing, because it strengthens economies, builds identity, and prepares communities for the future.

*Creative NZ ; Profile of Creative Professionals

2025	2026	2027	2028	2029	2030	2031	2032	2033	2034
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In 2025-2026 we will:

- Deliver the second Te Muka Toi, Te Muka Tākata Hui and expand outreach programmes.
- Begin creative and social infrastructure research and cultural values mapping.
- Extend capability-building through mentorship, workshops, and governance training.
- Strengthen funding pipelines through sector workshops and partnerships.
- Advance heritage priorities. Plan the first district-wide Heritage Festival and review the Art in Public Spaces policy to celebrate our stories, protect cultural assets, and ensure public art reflects our diverse heritage.
- Launch the Creative Spaces Project - transforming unexpected spaces throughout the District into creative hubs that amplify visibility and support a thriving, sustainable sector.
- See the townships of Glenorchy and Kinloch brought into the Dark Sky Places program as a Dark Sky Community.

By 2027-2030 we aim to:

- Embed coordination across events, heritage, and cultural programming.
- Establish sustained funding mechanisms and investment pathways.
- Track clear baselines for sector wellbeing, participation, and access.
- See resident sentiment on belonging and cultural expression steadily improve.
- Have robust research to support the investment and development of district-wide infrastructure.

By 2034 we expect:

- Creativity, culture, and heritage to be seen as essentials woven into infrastructure, planning, and economic development.
- Stronger national and international recognition of Queenstown Lakes as one of Aotearoa, New Zealand’s leading creative districts.
- A resilient, well-resourced creative sector where diverse communities, young people, and mana whenua are central to storytelling.
- A thriving creative economy that contributes to identity, social equity, and climate-conscious development.
- Visitors will have a diverse range of cultural experiences to choose from with creativity, culture and heritage playing a recognisable role in our visitor experience offering.
- Our creative industries to play a growing role in the composition of our workforce attracting established talent and organisations who earn a sustainable living
- There will be a deeper understanding of mātauraka Māori and cultural heritage stories.
- To be ready to join the global UNESCO Creative Cities Network, aligning our creative strengths with international benchmarks

Schoolhouse Studios Country Lane, Photo credit: Deanna Gerlach



Whai Wāhi ā-Hapori

Community Engagement

Our district has shown just how ready is to embrace creativity, culture, and heritage. Across festivals, workshops, exhibitions, and hui, participation has been high and the appetite for connection undeniable.

At the flagship hui in June 2025, more than 440 people signed up for four days of panels, workshops, and showcases. 91% of participants said it strengthened their creative confidence, 86% made new connections, and every single person valued the workshops. The final day of the hui featured 22 open studios across Queenstown, Wānaka, and Arrowtown, welcoming the public into the creative process and reinforcing the value of arts and culture in everyday life.

That momentum has extended well beyond this one event. Te Atamira welcomed 102,585 visitors this year and extended its reach through cultural outreach programmes in Glenorchy. The Lakes District Museum expanded its role through exhibitions, heritage signage, and oral history projects that bring the community's stories forward. Annual celebrations such as Waitangi Day, Matariki, and local festivals drew strong crowds, highlighting the community's commitment to shared cultural expression.

Digital engagement has played its part too. Te Wāhi Toi has connected 1,700 creatives and events to audiences and has sent over 100,000 newsletter subscribers. Online content of the hui was viewed more than 5,000 times, extending the impact to those who couldn't be in the room.

This first year has proven that when opportunities are created, people show up, to learn, to share, to celebrate.



Appendix 1

Kuputaka Glossary

This glossary provides clear definitions for sector-specific terms used in the report

KEY DELIVERY PARTNERS	
Regional Arts Organisation (RAO)	Established in 2019, TLCT is the district's Regional Arts Organisation. It provides strategic direction, advocacy, and support to strengthen arts, culture, and creative development. TLCT leads delivery of the Creativity, Culture & Heritage Strategy, coordinating partners, funding, and programmes across the district
Queenstown Lakes District Council (QLDC)	The local authority responsible for governance, planning, and community services in the Queenstown Lakes District. QLDC is a core partner in delivering the Creativity, Culture & Heritage Strategy, aligning it with wider council strategies, wellbeing outcomes, and infrastructure planning
Lakes District Museum & Gallery (LDM)	Founded in 1948, LDM is recognised as one of Aotearoa's leading small museums. Based in Arrowtown, it preserves and interprets the district's heritage through exhibitions, oral histories, education, and built heritage conservation. LDM plays a central role in protecting taoka and making heritage accessible to communities and visitors
Te Atamira (TA)	A creative and community arts space in Tāhuna Queenstown, Te Atamira provides studios, galleries, workshops, and performance spaces. It delivers outreach, capability-building, and cultural programmes across the district, supporting both emerging and established creatives
Film Queenstown Lakes (Film QL)	Operating within QLDC's Economic Futures team, Film QL is the region's screen office. It supports productions with permitting, locations, and crew connections, and is positioning the district as a national hub for outdoor and adventure filmmaking. Film QL also invests in training, talent pathways, and industry growth
Kāhui Tuawhenua (Inland Working Group)	A Kāi Tahu-led working group, ensuring that mana whenua values and aspirations remain integral to implementation of the Creativity, Culture & Heritage Strategy
Regional Tourism Organisations (RTOs)	Destination Queenstown (DQ) and Lake Wānaka Tourism (LWT) are the district's two RTOs. They lead destination marketing and management, and are evolving to celebrate cultural identity, heritage, and creativity as part of the visitor experience

Dark Sky Project Teams (TGDSST & KDSPT)	The Tāhuna Glenorchy Dark Sky Sanctuary and Kawarau Dark Skies Park project teams are community-led groups advancing dark skies initiatives. Their work blends ecology, science, mātauraka Māori, and cultural tourism, positioning the district as a leader in celestial heritage and environmental protection
Creative Economy	An ecosystem, the sum of all the parts of the creative industries, including trade, labour and production. Today, the creative industries are among the most dynamic sectors in the world economy*
Creative Industries	Professions and businesses based on creativity and intellectual property, from visual and performing arts to screen production, publishing, design, and cultural tourism
CSS - Creative Communities Scheme	CCS helps to fund local arts projects. Each year Creative New Zealand provides funding to city and district councils to distribute in their area
CLASS - Central Lakes Arts Support Scheme	Within QLDC's Arts, Culture and Heritage Funds, CLASS is a dedicated grant aimed at supporting local artists and creative projects across the district. It's tailored to provide modest but meaningful assistance to grassroots arts initiatives
Cultural Infrastructure	Facilities, systems, and resources that support cultural participation and production including galleries, museums, heritage sites, funding frameworks, and policy
Dark Sky Sanctuary	An internationally recognised designation, awarded by the International Dark-Sky Association, that identifies places with exceptional starry skies and a strong commitment to protecting them. In the district, Tāhuna Glenorchy was declared Aotearoa's fourth Dark Sky Sanctuary in 2025, with the Kawarau Dark Skies Park in development
Heritage Assets	Tangible and intangible elements of history, such as buildings, oral histories, wāhi tūpuna (ancestral places), and taoka (treasures)
Lakes District Arts Trust (LDAT)	The Lakes District Arts Trust was established in 2000 by Queenstown Lakes District Council as an independent arts trust. Over the past two decades, LDAT has delivered numerous public sculptures across the region. The trustees continue to identify both sites and artists for future installations, guided by a shared mission
Social Procurement	Procurement processes that deliver cultural, social, or environmental outcomes alongside economic ones
Wellbeing Indicators	Measures used to track how people are doing across health, culture, environment, and social connection
UNESCO Creative Cities Network	A global network recognising cities and districts that embed creativity into sustainable urban development and cultural policy

*United Nations Conference on Trade and Development

Kupu Te Reo Glossary

This glossary explains the Te Reo Māori words and concepts used throughout the report. It supports understanding of Kāi Tahu dialect, tikanga, and cultural terms that underpin the strategy

Auahataka	Creativity, innovation.
Ineka Akitū	Success measures, indicators.
Kaitiakitaka	Stewardship, guardianship; the responsibility of mana whenua to care for people, taoka, and place.
Kāi Tahu / Kā Rūnaka	The iwi and local rūnaka with mana whenua status in the Queenstown Lakes District.
Mana Whenua	Iwi authority over land through ancestral ties.
Manaakitaka	Hospitality, generosity, and care for others.
Mānawa Kāi Tahu	Kāi Tahu outcomes framework, drawn from the Queenstown Lakes Spatial Plan.
Mātauraka	Knowledge, wisdom, and understanding, especially traditional and cultural knowledge.
Mauri	The life force, vitality, or essence present in all living things, places, and communities. In a cultural context, mauri reflects wellbeing, balance, and the interconnected energy that sustains people and place.
Pakiwaitara	Legend, story, folklore, narrative.
Paparahi	Foundations or base structures.
Pou	A pillar, pole, or marker that symbolises a strategic priority.
Rakatahi	Younger generation, youth.
Takata Whenua	People of the land (mana whenua, indigenous to place).
Taoka	Treasures, both tangible (objects, landscapes) and intangible (stories, knowledge, memory).
Te Pūkeka	Training and skills, capability-building.
Tikaka	Customs, correct practice.
Tuakiri	Identity.
Wāhi Taoka	Treasured spaces, heritage sites, places of value.
Whakapapa	Genealogy, lineage, ancestral connections.
Whai Wāhi ā-Hapori	Community engagement, community participation.

Appendix 2

He Herenga ki Ētahi Atu Mahere

How This Strategy Connects with Other Plans

Te Muka Toi, Te Muka Tākata does not stand alone. It is one thread woven into the wider strategic direction of the Queenstown Lakes District. The work outlined in this report aligns with and supports a number of key strategies and plans:

Vision Beyond 2050 | He Wāhi Tūhāhā, He Āmua Whakaohoho

Council's guiding vision sets eight community outcomes from Thriving People to Breathtaking Creativity and Zero Carbon Communities. Te Muka Toi Te Muka Tākata is central to delivering Breathtaking Creativity, while also strengthening outcomes in wellbeing, resilience, and pride in place.

Grow Well | Whaiora Partnership – Joint Housing Action Plan | He Mahere Kāinga Tahī

This joint action plan, developed with Kāi Tahu, Kāinga Ora, central government, and community partners, focuses on housing access and affordability. Te Muka Toi Te Muka Tākata contributes by strengthening cultural infrastructure and community identity, enhancing liveability alongside housing outcomes.

Queenstown Lakes Economic Diversification Plan | Haereka whakamua ki tō ao taurikura – Pathways to a Thriving Future

Adopted in 2024, this plan sets a pathway for a more resilient, diverse economy. Creative industries are recognised as a growth sector. Te Muka Toi Te Muka Tākata provides the platform to accelerate this. From film and design to cultural tourism and events, ensuring creativity is an economic driver as well as a cultural one.

Welcoming Communities | Te Waharoa ki ngā Hapori

Queenstown Lakes is part of Immigration New Zealand's Welcoming Communities programme, which helps councils and communities create inclusive, welcoming environments for newcomers. Te Muka Toi Te Muka Tākata complements this by fostering a sense of belonging through shared stories, cultural visibility, and creative participation.

Climate & Biodiversity Plan 2022–2025 | Te Mahere Āhuarangi me te Rereka Rauropi

Council's plan to address climate change and ecological protection is supported by Te Muka Toi Te Muka Tākata through initiatives like Dark Sky Sanctuaries, cultural heritage protection, and creative projects that connect communities with the natural world.

Community Facilities and Infrastructure Planning | Mahere Hanga Whare Hapori me ngā Rauemi

QLDC's investment in facilities, parks, and spaces is strengthened by this strategy's focus on cultural infrastructure. Te Atamira, the Lakes District Museum, and new creative spaces ensure facilities serve community needs, support economic resilience, uphold Treaty partnerships, and embed creativity in how the district grows.

Queenstown Lakes Regenerative Tourism Plan Haereka whakamua ki tō ao taurikura – Travel to a Thriving Future

Haereka whakamua ki tō ao taurikura – Travel to a Thriving Future is the Destination Management Plan for the Queenstown Lakes District. It sets out a vision for a regenerative visitor economy that supports the long-term wellbeing of people, place, and culture.

Te Muka Toi, Te Muka Tākata complements this plan by delivering direct actions that strengthen both community and visitor outcomes:

- Cultural storytelling and heritage visibility in public spaces, supporting mana whenua narratives and enriching visitor experiences.
- Creative sector capability-building, ensuring local talent contributes to a vibrant economy and unique cultural offering.
- Events and hui that bring residents and visitors together, fostering participation and shared identity.
- Partnership with Kāi Tahu and community groups, embedding cultural values into how the district grows and hosts.



Queenstown Multicultural Festival, Photo credit: Tim Shoultz Photography



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