

DUNEDIN
FRINGE
FESTIVAL

FRINGE

20 April 2023

DUNEDIN FRINGE ARTS TRUST SUBMISSION TO THE DUNEDIN CITY COUNCIL'S DRAFT ANNUAL PLAN 2023-2024

BACKGROUND:

Dunedin Fringe Arts Trust (DFAT) is an anchor cultural organisation in Ōtepoti/Dunedin with a unique focus on providing open access opportunities for creative expression in the city. Our annual programmes include the **Dunedin Fringe Festival** (an annual 11-day multidisciplinary arts festival that's open to anyone who wants to participate), **Amped Music Project** (a music mentorship programme for high school aged youth), and the **New Zealand Young Writers Festival** (an annual 4-day literary festival by and for young writers). We are currently managing the pilot of **Te Whare o Rukutia**, a new performing arts venue that builds capacity for artistic output in the city. We also manage the **Dunedin Community Gallery** on behalf of the DCC, and curate the **White Box Gallery** in Fringe HQ.

Dunedin Fringe Arts Trust aims to bring new, innovative and experimental art to a wider audience, and has a special focus on supporting the work of young and emerging artists. We provide a vital platform for people of all abilities to **discover, explore, and nurture their own creativity and share their unique artistic voice**.

We have a vision for a city that is ignited by creativity: a city where all people embrace art, culture and creativity into their daily lives; a city that celebrates its artists as the changemakers and visionaries they are.

Dunedin City Council remains one of DFAT's most critical partners, providing multiple sources of funding for our programmes; partnering in the pilot of Te Whare o Rukutia and the management of the Dunedin Community Gallery; and providing office space for our HQ free of charge. We also acknowledge the DCC's vital role in supporting the wider arts and culture ecosystem of organisations, events and artists in Ōtepoti/Dunedin, who are essential to the health, wellbeing and social cohesion of the city's communities, while also contributing significantly to the economic vitality and liveability of Dunedin.

PRIORITIES:

1. Increased and multi-year funding: We appreciate that the Annual Plan does not propose cuts to existing funding for arts and culture in the city. However, when increased costs are factored in, maintaining existing funding levels translates to less funding for the sector. When coupled with the broader upheaval in the funding landscape for arts and culture – including Creative New Zealand’s review of its funding practices and Otago Community Trust’s intention to maintain or reduce levels of funding in the next few years – the sector locally is suffering significant stress, uncertainty and risk to the survival of our organisations.

Further, in 2022, DFAT experienced a significant drop in funding levels after our applications for contestable funding – a DCC City Service Grant (\$80,000), and later a Creative New Zealand Annual Arts Grant (\$150,000) – were declined. However, we continued to deliver our usual programming in addition to running the pilot of Te Whare o Rukutia and taking on the management of the Community Gallery. This level of programming is **completely unsustainable** on current levels of resourcing.

We call for the DCC to transition to **multi-year funding** for well established, anchor arts organisations like DFAT; organisations that are critical to the creative ecosystem of the city. This will help to mitigate the administrative burden of funding applications and reporting, and reduce the uncertainty and internal upheaval that is created by the boom-and-bust cycle of project-based funding. This will allow organisations like ours to be strategic rather than reactive. We also call on the DCC to enable organisations who are applying for multiple sources of funding each year to be able to **apply with a single application**. Funding practices should continue to be reviewed, as we know they are, by placing **equity principles** at their heart and reflecting more progressive funding practices such as [trust-based philanthropy](#).

2. Fund decolonisation, anti-racist and anti-ableist work: Arts and culture organisations are, rightly, increasingly expected to connect and collaborate with historically excluded communities – including Māori, Pasifika, other communities of colour, youth and people with disabilities. However, that work is currently not adequately funded, if it is funded at all. We encourage the DCC to explore collaborating with other local and national funders (like you do with OCT to provide current Capability funding) to provide financial support specifically for engaging mentors and trainers to help guide organisations through a genuine, ongoing journey of decolonisation, anti-racism and anti-ableism.

3. Performing arts infrastructure: A healthy performing arts ecosystem in Ōtepoti/Dunedin requires multiple venues that can support the development and presentation of creative work. There is no one solution to the issues facing both the performing arts and music communities in the city, and we believe investment into existing venues – including the New Athenaeum Theatre, The Playhouse and The Mayfair – is necessary, but should not exclude exploring building a new flexible performing arts space, or investment in (possibly temporary) spaces like Te Whare o Rukutia, that seek to address gaps in performing arts infrastructure in Dunedin.

However, we need to stress that any investment in performing arts infrastructure **must be accompanied by a commitment to support ongoing operational expenses**, as a venue

cannot meet community needs if it's not adequately staffed. We know this from experience: Te Whare o Rukutia continues to be under-resourced, lacking funding for adequate staffing levels, which in turn limits the potential success of the space. Additionally, any performing arts space receiving Council funding should include a commitment to keeping hire costs as affordable as possible for the communities using the space – there are already venues in the city that practitioners cannot afford to use.

Additionally, the infrastructure for all-ages music gigs has taken another blow with the loss of the Dog with Two Tails/Bark! venue. Given DFAT organises all-ages gigs for our [Amped Music Project](#), we are deeply invested in the maintenance of all-ages music venues in Ōtepoti. **We call on the DCC to proactively strategise how to protect all music venues around the city, including Te Whare o Rukutia, which is one of only several all-ages venues left.** This includes taking action on noise issues by increasing sound proofing requirements for residential developments in the central city.

4. Ara Toi strategy update: It's time for the [Ara Toi - Arts and Culture Strategy](#) to be reviewed and updated as a matter of priority. It was written in 2015, and a huge amount has changed in the arts and culture sector locally, nationally and internationally since then. The impact of the pandemic, inflation, the climate crisis, global conflict, Cyclone Gabrielle, the political environment, chronic long-term underinvestment in arts and culture, and changes to funding levels and strategies around the country, has created a highly challenging environment for artists and arts organisations. These conditions have led to burnout, poor staff health, inadequate and inequitable remuneration for staff and contractors, and an exodus of practitioners from the sector. The Strategy's stated vision – "Dunedin is one of the world's great small cities **with arts and culture at its core**" – needs very different approaches to be achieved in light of these new external pressures than those currently outlined.

Conclusion: Without greater investment in arts and culture by the Council, the outstanding reputation Ōtepoti has enjoyed as a hotbed of creativity filled with musical, literary and other artistic talent will disappear. We know everyone in this city is engaged in, and enriched by, art and culture – whether they recognise it or not. They listen to music, they watch movies, they read books, they cook food, they do kapa haka on the marae, they sing their culture's traditional songs, and so much more. We believe everyone has the right to express themselves creatively, and we know the ability to do so improves health, wellbeing and social cohesion. Art builds community: the kind of community the DCC wants to support. So we ask you to generously support our sector so we can support your vision for Ōtepoti in turn.

Ngā mihi nui,

Dunedin Fringe Arts Trust Leadership Team
Kate Schrader, Ruth Harvey & Katrina Thomson