

NZ On Air Response

Review of Māori Musicians and NZ On Air Music Funding

November 2025

Purpose

In March 2024, NZ On Air commissioned the Ka Korokī Ka Maranga|Māori Musicians Industry Collective (MMIC) to conduct a review of Māori Musicians and NZ On Air Music Funding. This was initiated to provide an overview of Māori artists working within the Aotearoa music industry and examine further a perceived lack of engagement and distrust of traditional funding models that was identified in Victoria Kelly's [2023 Review of NZ On Air Music Funding](#).

Through hui and one-to-one interviews, the review provides feedback from Māori working within the music industry, including artists, producers, managers and industry executives, and includes those who do not whakapapa Māori but who work with and/or support Māori artists.

The purpose of this response document is to consider and respond to the key points outlined within the review, and where appropriate, where we will look to consider implementing or further exploring certain recommendations that are within the remit of NZ On Air.

[*Te Pae Tata – Rautaki Māori*](#) is the guiding document that holds NZ On Air to account across all funding and operational aspects of Irirangi Te Motu|NZ On Air. Any outcomes of the review of Māori Musicians and NZ On Air Music Funding that are actionable for Māori music will be added to the Rautaki Māori.

Introduction

Sarah Owen (*Rongowhakaata, Ngāti Porou*) was enlisted by the MMIC to conduct the Māori Musicians and NZ On Air Music Funding review. Owen is kairangaranga for the MMIC, which is dedicated to elevating the presence and impact of Māori in the New Zealand music industry. Owen is also an Executive Committee member of the Music Managers Forum Aotearoa, a board member of the NZ Music Commission and a contractor providing services to organisations such as Recorded Music NZ.

The Māori Musicians and NZ On Air Music Funding review clearly acknowledges that NZ On Air has already put in place a number of recommendations from the 2023 Review of NZ On Air Music Funding that have had a positive impact on the music industry and directly address the challenges facing artists in general in the music sector in Aotearoa. These include:

- making the Artist Creation Fee mandatory on all funding streams and additional to the amount funded; and
- instituting changes to New Music Project funding that increase the funding amount, take away the requirement for financial co-investment and amend the drawdown process to provide funding in advance; and
- instituting changes to New Music Single funding including reducing the drawdowns from four to three and amending the drawdown process to provide funding in advance.

The review also recognises the [Te Pae Tata – Rautaki Māori 2024/25 strategy](#) which was published in June 2024 by NZ On Air and looks to ensure NZ On Air is delivering on its commitment to provide greater accountability and improved strategies for enhanced outcomes for Māori content creators and audiences.

The underlying message in the review is that “Māori music is more than entertainment—it is a testament to the strength and continuity of cultural identity. Whether expressed in te reo Māori, te reo Pākehā, or a fusion of both, it remains a dynamic and innovative force, ensuring the heritage of Aotearoa thrives in an interconnected world”.

Owen also clarifies that “while many of the barriers outlined in this review may not be entirely unique to Māori artists, it is essential to recognise that the response and strategies required be tailored to Māori experiences. Māori artists face distinct cultural and systemic challenges that require bespoke solutions which may differ from those applicable to the wider artist community”.

The following are responses to the recommendations made in the review, providing an indication of areas where we will look to focus our attention and areas that are either outside our remit or have already been addressed.

Responses to the Recommendations

Recommendation 1: Prioritise building genuine relationships with Māori communities and artists, ensuring their voices are heard and their contributions valued.

- **Offer funding workshops, mentoring sessions, or information drop-ins held in culturally safe spaces, such as kaupapa Māori organisations.**

NZ On Air Response:

Mentoring

Since 2016, NZ On Air has offered two mentoring/planning sessions with the Music Managers Forum Aotearoa (MMF) mentors to first-time funding recipients in any of the New Music funding streams.

In 2020 and 2021, via the additional Covid Recovery Fund, all New Music funding recipients were able to access mentoring via the Professional Services Assistance (PSA) fund.

Once the PSA funding was no longer available, in 2022 the MMF Mentoring was expanded to any artist that does not have a support network such as a record label, a music manager or publicist. In these mentoring/planning sessions, artists can receive advice and help with how to plan and release their funded music.

We will be continuing to work closely with the MMF to investigate further opportunities for more funded artists to be able to access and participate in mentoring and planning sessions.

Waiata Takitahi recipients, as well as New Music Pasifika and New Music Pan-Asian recipients, have the option of a MMF mentor from their ethnic community or the wider mentor pool. We will continue to work closely with the relevant communities to expand this list of mentors even further.

Funding workshops

We will look to schedule Zoom sessions/webinars/ kanohi ki te kanohi drop-ins in conjunction with MMIC.

***Recommendation 2: Simplify the process** - Make the funding application process clearer and more transparent, and create an environment where artists feel supported throughout the application process.*

- **Ensure that the objectives and criteria of the funding rounds are succinct and easy to understand.**
- **Streamline application and contracting processes, and provide different ways to present the information, in order to make them more accessible and less daunting.**
- **Provide different ways to learn more about the application processes (including in-person hui and video).**

NZ On Air Response:

As an agency tasked with administering taxpayer funds, there is always a focus on robust process and accountability in everything we do. As part of that robust process, and in response to this recommendation, we will look at the way information is presented in the funding application process with a view to using plain language and less jargon.

We will undertake an internal audit of the information on our website to ensure it is easy to comprehend and consistent across all funding rounds. Part of this could consider which formats would be most useful to reach audiences.

As an agency, NZ On Air is also investigating how application and contracting processes can be made more accessible. NZ On Air has recently updated New Music Single (NMS) and New Music Project (NMP) applications and contracts so it more clearly details that applicants can receive assistance with the contracting process.

In keeping with NZ On Air's Te Tiriti o Waitangi commitment to Mahi Tahi (Partnership), NZ On Air will look to schedule Zoom sessions/webinars/kanohi ki te kanohi drop-ins in conjunction with MMIC to provide personalised support.

Recommendation 3: Incorporate tikanga Māori into funding criteria and applications – embed concepts such as manaakitanga (hospitality), whanaungatanga (relationships) and kaitiakitanga (guardianship) into the criteria for assessing funding applications.

- **Manaakitanga** – assess how projects uplift and support others in the community
- **Whanaungatanga** – value collaborations with other Māori artists, hapori or iwi
- **Kaitiakitanga** – recognise contributions to preserving and revitalising Māori music and cultural identity.
- **Allow applicants to present their proposals in formats that align with Māori values and communication styles, such as kanohi ki te kanohi (face-to-face discussions), oral presentations or visual storytelling. This acknowledges the diversity of how Maori share their mātauranga (knowledge).**

NZ On Air Response:

NZ On Air's mandate in music is specifically to achieve broadcast outcomes. To that end, all funding decisions must be based on the strength of the song and the likelihood of it achieving airplay or streaming success. While we can look to ensure those voting on songs include Māori representation and understanding of authentic cultural representation, the final vote will always be about the merits of the song.

Given one of our primary functions within the Broadcasting Act is to promote Māori language and culture, NZ On Air is committed to ensuring the voices of Māori artists are heard and we feel this is demonstrated by the Waiata Takitahi co-fund which nurtures te reo Māori in waiata and supports our Te Tiriti commitment of Whakamarumarutia (Active Protection).

While we acknowledge the tikanga of kanohi ki te kanohi, our ability to allow oral presentations is currently restricted by the sheer weight of applications and our small team. However, we are investigating whether technology may help make our processes more accessible in future.

In response to a recommendation in this review, NZ On Air is also considering creating a tangata whenua funding round, which, if established, could include tikanga Māori within its criteria, alongside all the other broadcast outcome criteria for our general music funding rounds. (The broadcast outcome must remain the ultimate determinant, under our legislation.)

Recommendation 4: Establish a liaison role - Establish a Māori liaison or funding navigator role within NZ On Air to guide Māori artists through the funding process.

- **The Māori liaison or funding navigator role could help align project proposals with criteria and act as a point of contact for questions.**

NZ On Air Response:

The Music Team is comprised of a small and diverse staff with a deep understanding of the industry who are dedicated to engaging with the broader industry. Within the team is a Music Funding Advisor whose role it is to help guide artists through the funding process and to be the point of contact for any

questions. The Music Funding Advisor will liaise with the MMIC around specific requirements for Māori artists. As there are currently two members of the NZ On Air Music Team who are Māori, they will be able to evaluate who would be appropriate to assist the Music Funding Advisor with this mahi. It is important to note, however, that NZ On Air is currently unable to increase headcount due to funding restraint and a clear focus on content outcomes.

Recommendation 5: Representation in decision-making - ensure the presence of proper Māori representation in general funding rounds to ensure a culturally informed perspective in decision-making and validation of the unique needs and contributions of Māori musicians.

- **Include independent Māori music industry professionals, cultural advisors or kaihautū on funding assessment panels. Their presence ensures a culturally informed perspective in decision-making and validates the unique needs and contributions of Māori musicians.**

NZ On Air Response:

NZ On Air's mandate in music is specifically to achieve broadcast outcomes. To that end, all funding decisions must be based on the strength of the song and the likelihood of it achieving airplay or streaming success. While we can look to ensure those voting on songs include Māori representation and understanding of authentic cultural representation, the final vote will always be about the merits of the song.

The assessment panel for New Music Single has seven assessors. The panel for each funding round changes, but always includes a representative from Commercial Radio, a representative from Student Radio, and an independent Māori music industry professional.

However, we can invite a representative from Iwi radio to be on the panel at each hui.

Recommendation 6: Tailored feedback and support – provide culturally sensitive feedback for unsuccessful applications.

- **Focus on constructive pathways forward rather than 'rigid rejection'.**
- **Incorporate a wānanga (discussion) approach to help applicants refine their work.**

NZ On Air Response:

NZ On Air currently provides the following opportunities for applicants to receive feedback on their application:

All unsuccessful applicants are able to contact the Music Team to receive feedback on their application. However, NZ On Air will look to explore how we can further improve our communication that this is available to applicants.

Due to the high volume of applications in New Music Single (around 200 each round), we don't have the resource to automatically contact all unsuccessful applicants. With unsuccessful New Music Project applicants, a feedback session is offered within the funding result email and we will work with MMIC to encourage Māori artists to take up this opportunity.

In response to this recommendation, NZ On Air Music will consider increasing the number of webinars provided in advance of funds opening, including those provided alongside the MMIC specifically for Māori artists.

Recommendation 7: Support through professional and creative development - Support kaupapa Māori programmes designed to help artists develop their musical and creative skills as well as their understanding of the music industry.

- Support kaupapa Māori programmes including workshops, masterclasses and access to resources such as mentorship programmes.
- Encourage kaupapa Māori applications for Sector Support Funding that provides emerging Māori music managers and publicists the support they need.
- Promote collaborations and partnerships with other organisations and areas of the hapori puoro to help distribute the financial load and provide artists with the necessary resources to meet application requirements.

NZ On Air Response:

NZ On Air has a contestable industry support pou or funding stream as part of the wider NZ On Air investment strategy called Capability. Through this, an organisation can apply for funding to create and run workshops and masterclasses. The NZ On Air Music team will commit to meeting with the MMIC and MMF to discuss the application process and opportunity for this funding stream, to provide the relevant information to interested organisations.

NZ On Air Music already has a co-fund with Te Māngai Pāho, regularly contributes to other organisation initiatives such as APRA AMCOS Songhubs – which has included Reo Māori Songhubs – and is open to collaborating with other agencies with a shared kaupapa.

Recommendation 8: Evaluate a dedicated focus round – Consider either a dedicated focus round for Māori artists or proper representation for Māori in the general funding rounds that highlights Māori voices without focusing solely on te reo Māori outcomes.

- A dedicated funding stream or proper representation for Māori in the general funding rounds that highlights Māori voices, without focusing solely on te reo Māori outcomes.
- Balance the requirement for te reo Māori in funding applications with the need to support a diverse range of Māori musical expressions. While promoting te reo Maori is vital, and achieved through Waiata Takitahi, it is equally important to support artists who may not use the language but still contribute significantly to Māori culture and identity.

NZ On Air Response:

Waiata Takitahi is a co-fund with Te Māngai Pāho (TMP). At the time it was created, songs with te reo were underserved and by making the requirement only 25% te reo, it provided an entry level for artists who could then progress to applying for funding via TMP.

In the NZ On Air Music 2024 Diversity report, 18% of applications for New Music Single were from Māori or Māori European artists (receiving 15% of funding) and 13% of applications for New Music Project funding were Māori or Māori European, receiving 10% of funding. This data does not include those applying for funding via Waiata Takitahi.

In order to create a dedicated funding stream for Māori who may not use the language but still contribute significantly to Māori culture and identity, NZ On Air would need to reallocate funds from elsewhere. As we would with any potential new funding round, we would look to initiate further consultation with the community as a next step.

Recommendation 9: Micro-grants and seed funding – offer smaller, more accessible grants for initial project phases.

- **Enabling artists to work on and develop high-quality proposals and ‘grow into’ bigger funding rounds.**

NZ On Air Response:

Because NZ On Air’s mandate is tied to broadcast outcomes, it is not possible to have a funding stream for micro-grants or seed funding for initial project phases.

However, we support a range of opportunities for capability development, run by sector groups. We are open to receiving applications for Māori-specific targeted capability building opportunities and will work with the MMIC to provide the relevant information to interested organisations

Recommendation 10: Regular evaluations with input from Māori – mechanisms to regularly assess the cultural safety of funding programmes.

- **In line with Te Pae Tata, create mechanisms to assess the cultural safety of funding programmes regularly. Engage Māori artists and community representatives in evaluating whether processes are supportive, fair and culturally aligned.**

NZ On Air Response:

In keeping with our commitments within *Te Pae Tata – Rautaki Māori*, we will continue to develop our relationship with MMIC and the Māori music community providing opportunities for evaluation and feedback to ensure our funding rounds are supportive, fair and culturally aligned, along with achieving broadcast outcomes.

Summary of Actions

NZ On Air's relationship with Māori as a Tiriti partner is embodied not only in the Broadcasting Act, but in our Tiriti commitments and *Te Pae Tata – Rautaki Māori*. The valuable insights provided by the MMIC Review will help us build on those commitments through actions aimed at improving engagement and outcomes for Māori artists within the music funding ecosystem.

Key actions include:

- **Building genuine relationships:** We will look for opportunities to increase kanohi ki te kanohi engagement, Zoom sessions and webinars – particularly in partnership with MMIC – to support applicants through the funding journey.
- **Simplifying application processes:** We will review and refine how information is presented, to ensure clarity and accessibility, and explore alternative formats.
- **Expanding mentoring opportunities:** We will continue working with MMF to support artists without existing networks and investigate further opportunities for the mentor pool to be expanded so more funded artists can access and participate in mentoring and planning sessions
- **Supporting kaupapa Māori capability initiatives:** We will actively engage with MMIC and MMF to encourage applications to our Capability funding stream and offering guidance to organisations seeking to run workshops and masterclasses.
- **Exploring a tangata whenua funding round:** Budget allowing, we will consider a tangata whenua funding round and will consult with the community to ensure it reflects Māori aspirations and values.
- **Maintain Māori representation:** We will continue to include Māori assessors in funding panels and invite Iwi radio representatives to participate.
- **Improving feedback:** We will look at ways to make feedback more accessible by promoting opportunities for applicants to receive constructive feedback and increasing pre-application support.
- **Ongoing evaluation:** We will regularly review Māori participation and ensure our processes remain culturally safe, inclusive and aligned with broadcast outcomes.

These actions reflect NZ On Air's commitment to fostering a more inclusive, transparent and culturally responsive funding environment for Māori musicians and communities.