

Irirangi Te Motu
NZ On Air



CHILDREN'S FUNDING STRATEGY

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Children’s Funding Strategy

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Purpose of this document

The primary audience for this document are individuals or organisations involved in producing content for children. It presents the essential elements of the revised strategy and offers direction to those seeking funding for children's content. The content of this document has been shaped by extensive consultation and feedback within the industry (see [Appendix B](#)).

Background

NZ On Air is dedicated to delivering the highest quality content outcomes for tamariki and the children's media industry. As an evidence-led, platform-agnostic funding body, it is tasked with providing local cultural content for children, and is the leading funder of children's content in Aotearoa New Zealand.

In a small economy, creating screen content specifically for New Zealand children is a vital public media principle, requiring intervention in the market due to clear market failure. This strategy takes a pan-sector approach to prioritise children's needs, strengthen funding for children's content, and foster growth of the local platform ecosystem for children's content.

This will benefit platforms like Whakaata Māori (Māori Television), Prime/SKY, RNZ, Discovery, The CoconetTV, and others, in addition to Te Reo Tātaki (TVNZ), to enable greater access to the exceptional local children's content supported by NZ On Air.

Overview

The way children are consuming media is constantly evolving. NZ On Air carried out work in 2022 to update its children's funding strategy - with some key changes to how we plan to reach and strengthen onscreen representation of children aged 0-14 years in Aotearoa New Zealand.

In the context of a media environment in which children have largely shifted away from afterschool timeslots and linear TV viewing towards YouTube and other social media platforms, NZ On Air has a responsibility to both incentivise local television networks to remain committed to broadcasting local children's content on-air and online, engaging them in these spaces, and ensure that local content can be pushed and discovered on the digital platforms where they are.

There remains a group of children for whom linear TV is the primary method of viewing local children's content, and our own research shows that parents expect to find local content on linear TV (despite also saying that their children are less likely to watch here). For these reasons, our funding approach to children's content, while being digitally-led, continues to enable a home on linear TV and OnDemand to ensure that no children are left behind.

This strategy is guided by audience research (refer to [Appendix A](#)) and aims to increase its presence in more locations where children spend time consuming media. This encompasses local platforms, as well as YouTube Kids and other digital platforms.

We aim to cultivate a world-class creative community of children's content producers, which requires us to support more project development and implement improved strategies for marketing and promoting high-quality content, making it easier for parents and children to discover and enjoy it.

Our vision and purpose

OUR VISION	OUR PURPOSE
A range of local storytelling and songs reach our tamariki and have a positive impact on their lives.	Investing in distinctive, culturally rich content from Aotearoa that sparks creativity and curiosity.

Broadening our focus

For the past few years, our focus has been on content for children aged 5-9 years' old. We are looking to broaden this to focus on the following groups:

- Preschool (0 – 4 years)
- Primary (5 – 9 years)
- Intermediate (10 – 12 years)
- Early College (13 – 14 years)

Platform non-exclusivity

The primary goal of the updated strategy is to ensure that local children's content is available and promoted in numerous locations where parents and children can find it.

In recent years, we have largely concentrated on financing and distributing children's content through one main provider (TVNZ/HEIHEI) with a year-long exclusivity period before it can be released on other platforms (including YouTube). This approach is no longer a justifiable audience-led strategy based on our research on children's media (See [Appendix B](#)).

The revised strategy concentrates on promoting greater non-exclusivity of local children's content and extensive sharing to ensure that more platforms, including Prime, Whakaata Māori (Māori Television), RNZ, The CoconetTV, Spinoff, YouTube Kids, and others, can distribute our 100% taxpayer-funded content more extensively, increasing the touchpoints for content discovery. This strategy strongly advocates for cross-platform collaboration and partnership regarding applications for children's content.

Content development funding

Consultation with both local children's producers and international practitioners emphasised the critical importance of investing in content development for children's content - including for larger-scale projects that have ambitions to export local stories internationally. More time and resources were cited as the two most critical factors in generating higher quality children's content.

Children's drama and animation are the two genres eligible for screen incentives cross-subsidy with NZ On Air funding. This eligibility assists financing these comparatively expensive genres when the projects have ambitions to take local stories to the world but more needs to be done to maximise this opportunity.

We will be making unsupported development pūtea (does not require local platform support) more readily available to support children's projects to refine concepts and strengthen the writing, prototyping and packaging of children's programmes to take to international content markets. Priority will be given to projects with NZ Screen Production Grant (NZSPG) ambitions (see slide 56 of the [Children's Summit presentation](#)).

NZ On Air's ability to provide production funding for these types of projects remains constrained – with traditionally only one NZSPG children's project funded annually – but we are looking to increase this to allow for potentially two or more NZSPG projects and international co-productions per year.

Marketing and Publicity

We realise that radical sharing can lead to perceptions of content fragmentation and confusion of where to access content. We intend to focus on how we can strengthen the community around local children's content, increase discoverability of that content, and grow its visibility for parents and children.

Traditionally, children's content was largely discovered by parents and children through destination time slots (e.g. after school television). Moving forwards - as linear audiences decline further - this is less likely to be the case, so to be discovered we need to find new ways of introducing children to local content.

The new media landscape has many ways of reaching people with smart, targeted, and cost-effective solutions - like programmatic advertising - but this is not widely accessible to most producers and can be a dangerous space to enter into if guidelines for advertising to children are not adhered to. Reaching and engaging parents and children safely requires a greater degree of nuance and audience understanding.

To address this, NZ On Air is open to providing funding for marketing alongside funding for production for children's content. We intend this funding to augment rather than replace platform marketing where there is a local platform involved.

One of the key issues that the sector faces is that screen producers do not have access to the expertise of a media agency. Media agencies brief in paid channels, evaluate these, and manage the media buying and placement process. They also have the scale to unlock lower rates or higher profile placements.

Providing projects directly with a media budget is difficult as the size of each individual budget is not enough to effectively engage the services of a media agency or buy advertising directly.

For these reasons, we have designed and introduced a discoverability initiative in partnership with Contagion. What makes this initiative effective is the ability to combine many small

campaigns into one overall budget. This initiative includes the provision of funding for paid marketing and promotion - media buying and channel planning. This allows us to leverage scale and build shared tools and knowledge.

Projects considered for media support will be evaluated and categorised into three tiers based on established criteria by both staff and Contagion:

- **Tier 1** - Flagship content with high funding levels, assessed to have a high likelihood of success if barriers to discovery removed.
- **Tier 2** - Strong content with one or more indicators of potential success if barriers to discovery are removed.
- **Tier 3** – Content for hard-to-reach audiences with lower funding levels that has not yet proven itself with an audience.

The over-arching aim of these efforts is to improve discoverability of NZ On Air funded content.

Advertising to children has [strict guidelines](#) around how children may be advertised to so this would be adhered to in this mahi.

Te rautaki Māori

Our Broadcasting Act mandate to promote Māori language and Māori culture, and our current [te rautaki Māori](#) (2018) remain the foundational documents that guide our Te Tiriti commitment in the children’s content space. Our intent is to support the production of quality Māori content; to have good relationships with Māori content creators; and to uphold the mana tangata and mana iwi of funded content. We aim to provide audiences with content representing diverse Māori perspectives, made with the appropriate kaupapa, and which contributes to a visible Māori presence in media.

We will continue our purposeful partnership approach with Te Māngai Pāho to ensure alignment of outcomes for tamariki. This partnership approach has seen strong results for both Māori audiences and the Māori screen sector across initiatives including the annual Te Māngai Pāho/NZ On Air Co-Funds, Te Puna Kairangi (Premium Productions for International Audiences Fund) and Te Puna Whakatongarewa (the Public Interest Journalism Fund).

We likewise support [Maihi Karauna](#), The Crown’s Strategy for Māori Language Revitalisation 2019–2023 and see our role particularly aligned with one of the three key outcomes:

AOTEAROATANGA – NATIONHOOD

Te reo Māori is valued by Aotearoa whānui as a central part of national identity. Te reo Māori offers an opportunity for a shared sense of national identity, and it is important that this is reflected in the activities of government. Building a national sense of value for te reo Māori is also important in creating favourable societal conditions for its revitalisation.

How to apply

The key difference this year, is that projects with multiple platforms attached (and ideally multiple local platforms) will be prioritised. This will ideally be on a non-exclusive basis.

Producers will be required to secure a local free-to-air (FTA) partner for their project with an expectation that this partner will provide oversight of the project (including commissioning and Health and Safety requirements).

YouTube Kids is an acceptable additional platform and we encourage producers to think deeply about how content might live at all stages of the viewing journey and be presented and marketed in age appropriate ways, more widely across YouTube, or Reels for Insta and TikTok to encourage greater discoverability of funded content.

Below are best practice resources of how YouTube Kids recommends made-for-kids content:

[Made For Kids Best Practices](#)

[How YouTube Recommends Made For Kids Videos](#)

Games and Interactive

We are maintaining our engagement with the wider local games and interactive sector to gain a better understanding of children's needs in this area. Our discussions have highlighted that this space is intricate, and there are key elements to consider in any funding approach for local content. These include:

- Focusing more on touch-screen experiences for devices that children use, as web-interface games alone won't reach the widest range of tamariki.
- Critical need for better marketing and promotion of local games.
- Co-developing and co-designing games by partnering across the industry. There is a huge opportunity for curriculum alignment and engagement with teachers and students.
- Capitalising on existing IP by building off it, which is an excellent way to cross-promote and reach the existing audience of that IP (e.g. partnering with a series, movie or book to create games).
- Providing more opportunities to part-fund development (e.g. a prototype or proof of concept) to create more family-friendly local games for larger-scale platforms. Interactive projects can benefit greatly from a development process that allows for user testing a proof of concept before full production funding is committed. This can also be used to test the concept with the target audience to assess what is resonating.

We plan to continue operating the [games platform](#) until mid-2024. However, we intend to wind this platform down and close it from 1 July 2024, so we can focus our investment on producing games rather than running a browser-only environment for local children's games.

Audio

Interest in the children and youth audio landscape has grown significantly over the past few years. Audio provides a crucial alternative to screen-based entertainment, and developing listening and attention skills is vital to children's growth and development.

We are keen on supporting children's audio projects, including music and stories, that aim to aid in the enhancement of their listening and creative abilities and stimulate their imagination.

Our preference is for projects to have a local platform affiliation (e.g. RNZ) along with wider distribution on other free-to-access audio platforms that are used by UK parents and children. Further details on these opportunities will be outlined in the round guidelines.

Accessibility

We remain committed to ensuring that children's content is accessible for all tamariki. In partnership with [Able](#), we will continue to ensure that closed captions are made available for all funded content and that – where possible – audio description will be made available. Platforms carrying closed captions and/or audio descriptions will be required to do so when distributing NZ On Air-funded children's content.

Children's rights and safety

In 2017-18, a [framework for children's content](#) was developed under the guidance of the NZ Children's Screen Trust and Stacey Morrison. In accordance with the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCROC), we directly consulted with children and young people to ensure diverse voices were heard and broad participation from children and young people was included. We encourage producers and platforms to incorporate [UNCROC principles](#) when creating and commissioning local children's content.

This framework serves as the basis for NZ On Air's approach to funding children's media, and it remains as powerful and relevant today as it was when it was first established. It continues to guide our content strategy as we move forward.

Charter of Principles

There are public-good principles that underpin the provision of local content for children.

- Children have a right to accessible and diverse local media which is made specifically for them and which doesn't exploit them.
- Children should have access to media which entertains, educates and stimulates them and which allows them to develop to their fullest potential.
- Children should see themselves, their culture, their life experiences and hear their accents in a range of quality content which affirms their sense of self, community and place.

- Stories are vital for the development of identity and imagination. Stories relevant to their age and culture should be available to children of all ages.
- Children's media should be wide-ranging in genre and content, but should not include gratuitous scenes of violence and sex.
- Children's content should be regularly available at times and places useful to and used by children.
- Children of all backgrounds, ethnicities and abilities should see and hear themselves reflected positively in local content.
- Children must be enabled to exercise their creativity in making and interacting with content.

Pou	Content Principles	Content Pillars
Ngahautanga + Imagination <small>(fun)</small>	<p>Stories are vital for the development of identity and imagination. Stories relevant to their age and culture should be available to children of all ages.</p> <p>Children must be enabled to exercise their creativity and mastery in engaging with content.</p>	<p>1. Engaging</p> <p>2. Auahatanga <small>(creativity)</small></p> <p>3. Curiosity</p>
Tuakiritanga + Identity <small>(identity)</small>	<p>Children's content should reflect our relationship with the natural environment and our tūrangawaewae.</p> <p>Children should have access to content which stimulates and educates them and which allows them to develop to their fullest potential.</p>	<p>4. Whare Tapa Whā <small>(physical/spiritual/family/mental health)</small></p> <p>5. Kete aronui <small>(basket of knowledge of aroha)</small></p> <p>6. Whakatewhatewha <small>(examine, inquire, explore)</small></p>
Kanorautanga + Diversity <small>(diversity)</small>	<p>Children of all backgrounds, ethnicities and abilities should see themselves, their culture, their life experiences and hear their accents reflected positively in a range of content.</p> <p>Children's content should help build and affirm their sense of self, cultural identity, community and place.</p>	<p>7. Difference Uniqueness</p> <p>8. Aotearoa Local</p> <p>9. Whanaungatanga <small>(relationship, kinship)</small></p>
Hirangatanga + Excellence <small>(quality)</small>	<p>Children have a right to quality, local content which is made specifically for them and available at times and places useful to and used by children.</p> <p>Children's content should be wide-ranging in genre and content, but should not exploit them or harm them in any way.</p>	<p>10. Accessible</p> <p>11. Innovative</p> <p>12. Safe</p>

ScreenSafe Working with Children Safety Guidelines

In 2020, NZ On Air engaged ScreenSafe to review the current guidelines for Working with Children. ScreenSafe, with funding support from NZ On Air and the NZ Film Commission, then sought assistance from Safeguard The Children to conduct the review. After industry consultation and a review of the existing guidelines, ScreenSafe produced the current [Working with Children Safety Guidelines](#). These guidelines establish the minimum recommended standards for the screen sector to ensure the creation and maintenance of child-safe environments, free from abuse, exploitation and hazards

Key recommendations

- The Safeguarding and Protection of Children is the responsibility of everyone, from the Executive Producer down to the most junior members of the team.
- We all have human rights, but children have international legislation under The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child that NZ adheres to. This is the most widely ratified convention in history and underpins the guidance we now have in place.
- Children should be considered in every aspect of your work. Place a child-focused lens on all decision making.
- We ask you to put in place the same expectations that you would expect for your own child, niece or nephew.

What will happen to HEIHEI content?

The discontinuation of the third-party Videal platform that HEIHEI was built on in 2020 was incredibly disappointing and signalled a departure from the original intention of NZ On Air and TVNZ to create a comprehensive and fully interactive local content platform for children.

HEIHEI-branded content is excellent, diverse and beneficial for children who engage with it. However, the single-platform distribution model of HEIHEI content on TVNZ+ needs to be re-evaluated. Our current research indicates that we are only reaching an average of 6,290 logged-in users per week with HEIHEI content, which is about 1% of households with children in New Zealand. Our research aligns with this, as only 1% of parents claim that their children mainly watch HEIHEI¹ content. Our new strategy broadens our reach and engagement to keep up with the trends in children's content consumption across various local and international platforms.

As a result, in the absence of having one primary platform for all children's content, we have decided to stop using the HEIHEI brand on TVNZ+ from 2023.

Digital reporting requirements

To enable us to fairly measure the impact of children's content we will require producers and platforms to apply *NZ On Air VIEW* tracking to their content where they are able to. This will not be able to identify children individually, nor by ethnicity, nor reliably by age (e.g. younger children using parents' computers) – instead this will be an overall view of metrics such as time spent with content, impressions and views.

NZ On Air VIEW is a proprietary audience measurement system developed by NZ On Air. It gathers online data on the content that we fund and presents it in a dashboard. Most of this data is commercially sensitive and intended for internal use only. However, we will share high-level trends and information publicly, whenever possible.

¹ [HEIHEI Brand Awareness – May 2022 – Kantar Research](#)

Platforms that distribute NZ On Air-funded content (excluding music) must provide us with regular and accurate performance metrics across all media distribution aspects. This reporting is a crucial requirement for funding and must be taken into consideration before submitting any applications.

Appendix A – Children’s Media Research

Our Children’s Media Use research shows an ongoing trend of children rapidly moving away from traditional media platforms in favour of online ones. Given the increasing number of devices available to children at home, socially and as required for school, and the increasingly early ages at which consumption on these devices begins, it is unlikely that this trend will be reversed. Key research and data sources include:

- [Children's Media Use Survey 2020](#)
- Nielsen TAM
- TVNZ research
- Stats NZ
- [Dubit International and Local Media Review](#)
- [Chinese and Indian New Zealanders' Media Use in Aotearoa New Zealand in 2021](#)
- [HEIHEI Brand Awareness Report \(Kantar\)](#)
- [Interactive Aotearoa Report 2019](#)

Appendix B – Sector Consultation

Across the course of late 2021 – early 2022, NZ On Air staff met with over 130 practitioners (both 1:1 hui and via group discussions). This comprised 40+ hui and over 40 hours of kōrero. Key local and international platform and industry representatives consulted include:

- Te Reo Tātaki / TVNZ
- Whakaata Māori / Māori Television
- Prime / SKY TV
- RNZ
- The Coconet
- The Spinoff
- NZ Children’s Screen Trust
- Ministry of Education
- CODE (New Zealand Centre of Digital Excellence)
- SPADA
- Aotearoa Screen Publicists Collective (ASPC)
- ABC (Australia)
- Australian Children's Television Foundation (ACTF)
- British Film Institute (BFI)
- The Children's Media Foundation (UK)
- Wildbrain (Canada)

A virtual children’s summit was held on 5 April 2022. We have collated the presentations from the day into a single slide deck, which is [available for download here](#).