

# ANNUAL REPORT

2023/24

WellingtonNZ



# Contents

<b>2</b>	<b>From the Chair and CEO</b>
<b>4</b>	<b>By the numbers</b>
<b>5</b>	<b>Major Events</b>
<b>6</b>	<b>Venues Wellington</b>
<b>7</b>	<b>TRENZ</b>
<b>8</b>	<b>Regional Economic Development Plan</b>
<b>9</b>	<b>Wairarapa Economic Development Strategy</b>
<b>10</b>	<b>Māori Economic Development</b>
<b>11</b>	<b>Tech Sector</b>
<b>12</b>	<b>Creative HQ</b>
<b>13</b>	<b>Screen Wellington</b>
<b>14</b>	<b>Owned channels</b>
<b>15</b>	<b>ESC campaign</b>
<b>16</b>	<b>Our people</b>

# FROM THE CHAIR AND CEO



## Tēnā koutou katoa,

We are writing this as spring reaches Wellington. It's more welcome than ever this year – longer days, better weather, and a promise of better times ahead. One of the events that ushers in spring in the capital each year is the World of WearableArt Show.

WOW is one of Wellington's iconic events – world class, unique and able to attract visitors in their tens of thousands from around the country and offshore, every year.

Last year, the three-week event contributed more than \$30 million to the region, with 60 per cent of its audience coming from outside Wellington. That \$30 million is made up of money spent by visitors on attending the event itself, on accommodation at our hotels, on food and beverages throughout our city, and in our retail outlets. It constitutes vitality for our business sector, and vibrancy for our city.

It's also a shining star in our galaxy of stand-out events that WellingtonNZ helps make happen every year.

As the region's economic development agency, we are part of a broad and varied eco-system of individuals and organisations that play a role in bringing economic wellbeing to our region – from

individual businesses and their customers, to iwi, and local and central government, to sector groups and business networks.

In challenging times, it's important to think carefully about our role, and where our contribution can make the biggest difference.

For this reason, our strategy is focused firmly around a few big "rocks": attracting and supporting major events; attracting tourists and visitors to our region; supporting our growing, high value tech sector (including screen and gaming); and contributing to business growth through our Māori economic development strategy, through the Regional Economic Development Plan, and through our innovation and start-up engine, Creative HQ.

## A few highlights from the year

- In the 2023/24 financial year WellingtonNZ delivered 28 major event partnerships generating \$73.8 million in out of region visitor spend into our local economy, and with an average of 90% satisfaction for event attendees.
- We hosted more than 360 performances and business events in our venues, bringing thousands of people into the city. The out of region spend for these attendees was a further \$33.5 million.

- Our Escape to Wellington marketing campaign targeted the high value North American market, generated 1.26+ billion earned media impressions and over 70,000 positive sentiments towards Wellington on social media. Following the campaign we have seen visitors from the US overtake Australian visitors as our highest spending travellers, bringing a significant contribution into our local economy.
- Our new You Would in Wellington campaign has resulted in 2.7 million completed video views and 39% of respondents having seen the video indicating they would probably visit Wellington in winter and spring.
- We issued 257 screen permits for productions which have contributed more than \$48 million of economic impact into the region.
- With our team's support, a tech hub, with nine inaugural businesses, has opened at Te Herenga Waka Victoria University of Wellington to foster collaboration and growth.
- Our subsidiary Creative HQ celebrated 20 years as a leader of innovation. In the year in review alone, CHQ supported more than 1000 organisations through its programmes. CHQ's significant contribution to the Wellington business scene was recognised when it received The Post Supreme Gold Award.

WellingtonNZ has this year welcomed new board members John Apanowicz from Wellington City Council, and Janet Holborow from Kāpiti Coast District Council. We sincerely thank outgoing members Wayne Mulligan and Kylie Archer for their exceptional service, their insights and their commitment to our region's success, over many years.

Spring always brings with it strong winds, and we know that this season's headwinds may last a little longer than usual. Infrastructure development brings disruption, but progress is vital. In the meantime, WellingtonNZ continues to act within (and sometimes beyond) our remit to support businesses affected by disruption and to advocate for the prosperity of our capital city.

At WellingtonNZ we regard it as our role to be positive and optimistic for our city and our region, while providing pragmatic support where we can. And in the vein of optimism, it's worth noting that the summer events pipeline is strong, our technology sector is continuing to grow, delivering jobs and weightless exports, and world class experiences like Zealandia Te Māra a Tāne and Te Papa continue to draw people to our region. We can do even more, but in a challenging national and global context we are holding our own.

Inherent in the message of our You Would in Wellington campaign is a reminder that this region is a place where we **do**; where anything is possible, where we achieve, dream, thrive and change.

**Tracey Bridges**  
Chair

**John Allen**  
Chief Executive

# BY THE NUMBERS

**\$230,388,953**

Direct economic impact of WNZ activity and intervention

**2,922**

Business engagements

**\$36.4M**

EAV from media activity

**115,408**

Australian Visitor Arrivals\*

**163,012**

International Visitor Arrivals\*

**\$110,312,311**

Out of region expenditure generated from events^

**630,330**

Wellington residents that attend events

**94%**

Stakeholder satisfaction

**322,579**

Number of filled jobs in region

**\$1,062M**

Domestic visitor spend#

**\$295M**

Other visitor spend#

**2,764,000**

Total visitor nights

**\$84,396**

Mean annual earnings of people in employment in region

**257**

Screen permits issued

**\$48.9M**

Value of screen permitting

\*Through Wellington International Airport ^Includes Business, performance and major events #Card spend



**28**

Partnerships  
successfully  
delivered

**\$73.8M**

Visitor spend

# MAJOR EVENTS

It was a standout year for WellingtonNZ's Major Events team with 28 major and regional event partnerships successfully delivered across arts and culture, sports, food and beverage, concerts and festivals.

One of the highlights was the FIFA Women's World Cup which delivered more than \$22.5 million in visitor spend to the region and attracted 243,000 people to matches in July and August – 100,000 of those came from outside the region further boosting bed nights for the accommodation sector.

In total, major events injected more than \$73 million into the Wellington region and hosted 1.08 million attendees – a

gratifying result in a challenging year for business. In addition to the economic benefit, research revealed 92% of Wellingtonians said hosting events made the city a great place to live.

The broad range of events and results achieved endorse the capital's major events strategic framework delivered by WellingtonNZ working in partnership with the events sector to maximise the economic, reputational and social outcomes to the region.


**364**

 Performance  
and business  
events  
delivered

**433,636**

 Attendees at  
performance  
and business  
events

# VENUES WELLINGTON

With the St James Theatre back in full swing after a major upgrade, WellingtonNZ's venues have been humming over the past year.

In total, the Venues Wellington team delivered 364 events which equated to more than 430,000 people through the doors of the St James Theatre, The Opera House, TSB Arena and Michael Fowler Centre.

Musicals Kinky Boots and Wicked sold 16,000 and 28,000 tickets respectively while US rockers Queens of the Stone Age sold out the TSB Arena in March, a feat matched by singer-songwriter James Taylor and rapper Macklemore in May.

The Michael Fowler Centre was at capacity for three nights featuring UK comedian Dawn French and the ever-popular New Zealand Art Show celebrated its 20th anniversary at TSB Arena.

Performance events continue to be an important part of Wellington's economy, generating an average 2.35 visitor nights in the city for domestic attendees and 4.14 visitor nights for international attendees. They are also well-enjoyed by Wellingtonians with a quarter of a million locals attending a performance event during this period.



**43%**

Awareness increase with international buyers

**\$2.97M**

Spent in Wellington by TRENZ delegates

# TRENZ

**In a first for Wellington, New Zealand’s biggest international tourism business event took place at the city’s new convention centre.**

More than 1,000 delegates attended TRENZ 2024 at the Tākina Wellington Convention & Exhibition Centre in May, including 300 travel buyers from 25 countries and 313 tourism businesses from across Aotearoa showcasing their services and products.

Over two days there were 15,000 appointments scheduled between buyers and sellers where contracts for accommodation, transport and activities for the coming holiday seasons were negotiated, generating millions of dollars for the New Zealand economy.

TRENZ also provided the opportunity to promote the capital with WellingtonNZ organising nearly 50 familiarisation tours to show buyers some of the region’s key attractions, with a focus on creative and natural features.

The impact from TRENZ has already begun to be felt with two high-end US companies adding an extra night to its New Zealand itineraries to be spent in Wellington.





**31**  
REDP  
initiatives in  
implementation

**\$4.2M**  
Additional  
funding  
secured

# REGIONAL ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT PLAN

Despite a global economic slowdown, the 2023/24 financial year has produced job growth and new spending opportunities for the Wellington region.

Launched in 2022, the Wellington Regional Economic Development Plan (REDP) guides the long-term direction of the regional economy in Wellington, Wairarapa and Horowhenua. It includes initiatives focusing on screen, STEM, food and fibre, tourism, and enablers including Māori economic development, skills, water security, and resilient infrastructure.

Highlights from FY24 include:

- At least 300 screen sector jobs created through Wolfman, Red Rocks, and Time Bandits productions.

- 18 Screen Accelerator participants developed unscripted show ideas to pitch to buyers.
- 16 internships provided through the Summer of Engineering programme.
- 45% increase in the reach of House of Science kits in schools in Wellington city and Porirua.
- 22 students participating in the E2E Centre STEAMM programme.
- 17 Tech leadership series events completed with over 600 attendees.
- 65 hospitality business engaged in LoCarb sustainability programme.
- More than 120 attendees at Pasifika networking series for students and businesses.
- Identified a need for 700 more hectares of industrial land for growth over the next 30 years and started analysis of potential sites.



**\$1 : \$6.50**

Investment ratio  
for Wairarapa  
council  
contributions

**\$1.87M**

Additional  
funding  
secured

# WAIRARAPA ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY

**Small to medium businesses are the backbone of Wairarapa's economy and identity – something embodied in the Wairarapa Economic Development Strategy (WEDS) that WellingtonNZ manages the delivery of.**

Highlights from FY24 include:

- Supporting the Waingawa Industrial Park Water Security Project by securing \$1.75 million from Kanoa and prioritising WEDS resources.
- Developing and delivering a water education series to encourage collective opportunities for managing water on-farm.
- Delivering the first Rangatahi Hustle in partnership with Rebel Business School to inspire 35 graduates to become future entrepreneurs.
- Supporting 21 businesses build their management capability through the Regional Business Partners Programme.
- 88 individuals engaged in Good 2 Great, a communication and leadership programme designed by the primary sector workforce group to increase workforce development and retention.
- Establishing Tū Hauoranga Trust and launching a New Zealand first programme to bolster Wairarapa's healthcare workforce.
- Supporting delivery of the Wairarapa Water Resilience Strategy.



**PROCUREMENT STRATEGY**

Developed and launched

**49**

Māori businesses and projects supported

# MĀORI ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

During the 2023/24 year there was a deliberate shift towards the direct enablement of Māori in business within the regional economy.

This approach was informed by a seminal report commissioned by WellingtonNZ: [Opportunities for Impact Through Procurement](#).

This current state assessment used insights from industry experts and buyers and suppliers of products and services to identify a set of actionable opportunities for impact across some key themes.

In response, WellingtonNZ was able to deploy resources to progress actions

focused on capability building, collaboration, support and action.

The total value of contracts was \$208,100 of which \$195,600 was awarded to businesses who self-identified as Māori. The value to the wider economy, both in terms of financial and non-financial benefits, is an important accountability metric. This is being progressed with agencies and social enterprises to identify a suitable framework for future reporting.

Two new Māori-centric KPIs were added to WellingtonNZ's SOI this year, to track the number of Māori businesses and projects supported, and their level of satisfaction. The intent is to grow from the base line that has been established.



## **TECH HUB**

Launched with nine companies on board

## **FIRST**

Climate Tech Summit held in Wellington

# TECH SECTOR

**Wellington's reputation as a technology hub was enhanced over the year through a number of initiatives for founders, leaders and investors.**

One of the key achievements was the opening of a startup hub at Te Herenga Waka Victoria University to promote a culture of ambition and collaboration. The hub is now the workplace of 61 tech sector workers from 17 companies including Cogo and Tourwriter. The aim is to grow the hub to three levels and to continue to embed startup culture and education in the business school.

Meanwhile, work continues to support existing scale-up companies with workshops to upskill leaders in growth strategy, pricing, technology leadership,

business strengthening and job creation.

There have also been a number of events to raise the profile of entrepreneurship and support the tech sector to collaborate and grow. Among those was the Electrify conference for women founders which attracted 600 people and a Climate Tech Summit with climate-focused investors from New Zealand and Australia attended by 520 people.

In addition there has been an investor breakfast, monthly sessions with different investment fund representatives and two scouting days where companies are directly introduced to funders. Next Work raised \$2.3m as a result of meeting an investor at one of the events and now employs 11 people in a Te Aro office.



**679**

Start-up  
sessions

**SUPREME  
WINNER**

Wellington  
Gold Awards

# CREATIVE HQ

**Over the past year, Creative HQ has demonstrated remarkable resilience and impact amidst challenging conditions for businesses in Aotearoa.**

Their strategic reset aligns with the national goal of 5,000 startups by 2030, with Creative HQ committed to fostering 400 thriving companies by then.

It has significantly expanded support for early-stage founders through initiatives like Startup Aotearoa, which provides free coaching and vital connections nationwide, and their 50Up programme, empowering entrepreneurs over 50.

The third Climate Response Accelerator excelled, facilitating substantial

investment and media exposure for innovative climate startups. They introduced 'On The Business' workshops, offering targeted, hands-on support to founders, while the Youth Innovation Hack engaged young talent in real-world projects. CHQ also hosted the 2023 Innovation Election Debate, spotlighting political support for Kiwi innovation.

Celebrating their 20th birthday, they reflected on two decades of impactful work, earning accolades such as the Hi-Tech Award for Best Contribution to the Tech Sector. Looking ahead, CHQ is committed to placemaking Wellington as a region where entrepreneurs and innovators can thrive, and where high-growth companies can accelerate their growth, create jobs, and attract investment.



**257**

Screen permits issued

**\$48.9M**

Value of screen permits

# SCREEN WELLINGTON

Wellington's iconic coast and scenery have been in demand by filmmakers making a beeline for the region.

Time Bandits, Red Rocks and Wolfman were all filmed on location here while the Avatar sequels have been happening at Stone Street Studios and Lane Street Studios had its first major long-term studio production.

Kāpiti-born Hollywood director Andrew Nichol chose Wellington for his first New Zealand-based film project I, Object. Filming came just ahead of a Canada-New Zealand co-production summit, the first to take place in Wellington with 90 film producers attending.

The capital's VFX, animation and post-production sector continues to grow and there were Academy Awards for work on War is Over, and Avatar.

Screen Wellington supported film workshops for year 7-10 Pasifika students, the Alofa Awards recognising Pacific excellence in short films, industry events and youth programmes at Māoriland and facilitated internships on locally made te reo film Kōkā.

Wellington continues to leverage its UNESCO Creative City of Film status, hosting the inaugural Wellington Animation Film Festival in partnership with the Annecy International Animation Film Festival, and attending the UNESCO Creative Cities AGM in Portugal.



**1.9M**  
Visitors to  
WellingtonNZ  
website

**288,000**  
Advent  
vouchers  
downloaded

# DIGITAL CHANNELS

**In just 12 months, the new WellingtonNZ website had just shy of 2 million visitors accounting for more than 3.3 million page views across the site.**

The visit section alone accounted for almost 800,000 visitors with time on site doubling to an average of 6 minutes.

Content has been a large draw card for Wellington visitors with the homepage receiving more than 195,000 page views by itself.

Organic search makes up 44% of the audience, with 22.5% coming from direct traffic (newsletters) and 21.9% from organic social. Direct traffic is up 68% on last year with social jumping 14%.

Facebook reached more than 9.4 million people, growing almost 21,000 follows in a year to more than 191,000 followers. Instagram reached more than 3.7 million people, growing almost 19,000 follows to 127,000 followers.

The new WellingtonNZ website has become Wellington's biggest billboard, receiving finalist nominations in both the Webby Awards and the Best Design Awards.

This year's Advent Calendar was the biggest yet with more than \$660,000 generated for local businesses. There were 288,000 vouchers downloaded from 173,000 users who generated close to 4 million page views across the months of December and January.



**5M**  
Video views

**\$15M+**  
Equivalent  
Advertising  
Value

# ESC CAMPAIGN

An off-shore PR and marketing campaign in the high-value trade market of North America sought to raise awareness and drive consideration of Wellington as a desirable place to live and work.

The Escape campaign was launched in August with the installation of a large yellow Esc key activation in a central Manhattan square, asking New Yorkers to reflect on their work-life balance and imagine a new life in Wellington.

Passersby interacted with the key, and received real and personalised job advertisements displayed on a large digital billboard. The intention was to drive media, publicity and discussion of

work-life balance and the content captured during the activation was used across August in a multi-channel digital campaign.

The Escape campaign generated more than \$15 million in Equivalent Advertising Value against a pre-campaign objective of \$2-3 million. More than 10,000 people submitted expressions of interest in moving to or visiting Wellington on the campaign landing page.

Across paid and organic digital media there have been close to 5 million video views and it has reached more than 7 million people on digital channels.





# OUR PEOPLE

The team at WellingtonNZ is the cornerstone of its success. This year, WellingtonNZ transitioned from a brief engagement pulse survey to a comprehensive engagement survey.

Although this shift led to a decrease in engagement score from 76% to 66%, it has provided deeper insights, supported by a strong participation rate of 78%.

The survey results highlight that 85% of employees are proud to work for WellingtonNZ, 83% believe their managers genuinely care about their wellbeing, and 82% understand what they need to succeed in their roles. Despite these positive indicators, there are key areas for improvement, including

concerns about remuneration fairness compared to other organisations, a need for more learning and development opportunities, and clarity around career progression.

WellingtonNZ is committed to addressing these concerns through a clear action plan and the development of a new people strategy.

Importantly, a low turnover rate this year underscores the team's dedication to the organisation's goals and their vital role in making the Wellington region thrive. WellingtonNZ is grateful for their commitment and is focused on building an even more supportive and rewarding work environment.

# NGĀ MIHI

# INDEPENDENT AUDITORS REPORT 2023/24



WellingtonNZ