

Children’s Content Funding Framework (2022-23)

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Purpose of this document

This document is aimed primarily at children’s content producers. It outlines the key components of the updated strategy and provides guidance for producers who intend to apply for children’s content funding in FY2022-23. It has been informed by extensive sector consultation and feedback (see [Appendix B](#)).

Background

NZ On Air is an evidence-led, platform-agnostic funding body committed to achieving the best possible content outcomes for tamariki and for the children’s media sector. It has a statutory responsibility to provide local cultural content for children.

Screen content made specifically for New Zealand children is a core public media principle, requiring market intervention because of clear market failure in a small economy. However, this is set to change with the new Public Media Entity (PME) launching in market in mid-2023.

The PME announcement is an opportunity to develop an enhanced pan-sector approach to ensure children’s needs are considered, and that children’s content funding is strengthened to grow the local platform ecosystem for children’s content – bolstering platforms like Whakaata Māori (Māori Television), Prime/SKY, RNZ, Discovery, and The CoconetTV alongside Te Reo Tātaki (TVNZ) to create wider access to the brilliant local children’s content NZ On Air funds.

Overview

The way children are consuming media is always evolving. NZ On Air has recently undertaken work to update its children’s content funding strategy – with some key changes to how we plan to reach and strengthen onscreen representation of children aged 0 – 14 years in Aotearoa.

In the context of a media environment in which children have largely drifted 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 cohort of children to 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 digital first, continues to enable a home on linear TV and OnDemand to ensure that no children are left behind.

This strategy is led by audience research (see [Appendix A](#)) and is actively seeking ways to be present in more places where children spend time consuming media. This includes local platforms, as well as YouTube Kids and other digital-first platforms.

We want to foster a world-class creative community of children’s content makers and to do that we need to support more project development and employ better strategies for marketing and promoting quality content so that parents and children can more easily discover and enjoy it.

Our vision and purpose remains the same

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.

What's changed?

- **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 core aim of the updated strategy is to ensure that local children's content lives and is pushed in multiple places where parents and children can discover it.
- In recent years, we have focused largely on funding and distributing children's content via one primary provider (TVNZ/HEIHEI) with year-long exclusivity of content before it can be distributed on other platforms (including YouTube). This approach is no longer a justifiable audience-led strategy based on our children's media research (See [Appendix B](#)).
- The updated strategy focuses on greater non-exclusivity of local children's content and radical sharing to ensure that broader platforms than just Te Reo Tātaki (TVNZ) including Prime, Whakaata Māori (Māori Television), RNZ, The CoconetTV, Spinoff, YouTube Kids and others can distribute our 100% taxpayer funded content more widely, increasing the touch points for content discovery. This strategy strongly encourages cross-platform collaboration and partnership regarding children's content applications.

- **Development**

- Extensive consultation with both local producers and international practitioners emphasised the critical importance of investing in development for children's content – including for larger-scale projects that have ambitions to export local stories internationally.
- 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 development pūtea available in FY2022-23 to support projects to refine concepts and strengthen the writing, prototyping and packaging of

children's programmes to take to market. Priority will be given to NZ Screen Production Grant (NZSPG) projects (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 broadly one NZSPG children's project funded annually – but we are looking to increase this to allow for potentially up to two projects per year.
- **Marketing and Publicity**
 - Traditionally, children's content was largely discovered by parents and children through destination time slots (e.g. TVNZ 2 after school). Moving forward – 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 advertising¹ – 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 counter this we are exploring a partnership with a local media agency who will be able to offer both overall industry guidance, as well as customised packages to producers to enable them to promote their content. Over time this will build up a repository of shared learnings which will feed in to increasing the promotion and discoverability of children's content.
 - We are similarly exploring opportunities for co-ordinated publicity efforts to better showcase projects as they are released across the year.
 - 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.
 - 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

¹ Programmatic ad buying is the use of software to buy digital advertising. While the traditional method includes requests for proposals, tenders, quotes, and negotiation, programmatic buying uses algorithmic software to buy and sell online display space.

the children’s content space. Our intent is to support the production of quality Māori content made for a general audience; 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). In terms of children’s content, we see the focus of a joint-agency collaboration in 2022-23 starting with experimentation and piloting new ways of working together with an eye towards a bigger picture partnership and joint strategy for children from FY2023 onwards.

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 continue to engage with the wider local games and interactive sector to better understand the needs of children in this space. It is clear from these discussions that this area is complex, and key aspects should be considered in any approach to funding local content. These include:

- In terms of the devices children are using, focusing more on touch-screen experiences as web-interface games alone won't reach the widest range of tamariki.
- Better marketing and promotion of local games is critical.
- Partnering across industry to co-develop and co-design games. Curriculum alignment and engagement with teachers and students is a huge opportunity.
- Building off existing IP is a great way to cross-promote and capitalise on that IP's existing audience (e.g. partnering with a series, movie or book to create games).
- Greater 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 really benefit 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 with them.

More details about these opportunities will be included in the round guidelines. We will continue to operate the [games platform](#) in 2022-23 with a view to also broadening our scope to fund games and interactive content on other platforms that we know children are using.

Audio

Interest in the children and youth audio landscape has grown dramatically in the last few years. Audio offers an important alternative to screen-based forms of entertainment, and listening and attention skills are important aspects of children's development.

We are interested in applications for children's audio projects of both music and stories that aim to help children develop their listening and creative skills and expand their imagination.

Our preference is for projects to be submitted with a local platform attached (e.g. RNZ) alongside wider distribution on other free-to-access audio platforms that NZ parents and children use. More details about these opportunities will be included 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

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>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Engaging 2. Auahatanga <small>(creativity)</small> 3. Curiosity
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>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 4. Whare Tapa Whā <small>(physical/spiritual/family/mental health)</small> 5. Kete aronui <small>(basket of knowledge of aroha)</small> 6. Whakatewhatewha <small>(examine, inquire, explore)</small>
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>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 7. Difference Uniqueness 8. Aotearoa Local 9. Whanaungatanga <small>(relationship, kinship)</small>
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>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 10. Accessible 11. Innovative 12. Safe

A [children’s content framework](#) was designed in 2017-18 with the guidance of the NZ Children’s Screen Trust and Stacey Morrison. In line with the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCROC)², we consulted directly with children and young people to ensure diverse voices were represented and participation by a broad range of children and young people took place. We encourage producers and platforms to engage with [UNCROC](#) in the creation and commissioning of local children’s content.

² UNCROC is a comprehensive human rights treaty that enshrines specific children’s rights in international law. It was adopted by the United Nations in 1989 and defines universal principles and standards for the status and treatment of children worldwide. UNCROC was ratified by New Zealand in 1993. All United Nations member states, except for the United States of America, have ratified the Convention. <https://tinyurl.com/2cav34bj>

This framework provides the foundation for NZ On Air's approach to funding children's media, and it remains as powerful and as relevant now as it did when it was created. It continues to be our guiding 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.

ScreenSafe Working with Children Safety Guidelines

In 2020 ScreenSafe was engaged to review the current Working with Children guidelines by NZ On Air. With funding support from NZ On Air and the NZ Film Commission, ScreenSafe engaged Safeguard The Children to help with this review. After consultation with industry and reviewing the current guidelines, ScreenSafe created the current [Working with Children Safety Guidelines](#). These guidelines set minimum recommended standards for the screen sector to create and maintain 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?

[HEIHEI content](#) is strong, diverse and rewarding for the children who engage with it. There is no issue with the HEIHEI content created, however, the mode of single-platform distribution of that content requires a rethink. Our current HEIHEI performance data shows that we are reaching an average of 6,290 logged in users a week (circa 1% of the households with children in NZ). This number matches our own research conducted this year where 1% of parents claim that their child mainly watches content on HEIHEI³. We need to broaden the scope of our reach and engagement to match the trends we are seeing in the places children spend their time viewing content across local and international platforms.

The discontinuation of the third-party Videia 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 build a fully interactive and encompassing local content platform for tamariki.

The question of what can be learned from HEIHEI is an important one and feedback from the sector has been that a review of HEIHEI is required in order to inform the shape of local children’s media provision – especially with the establishment of the new PME. We will be commissioning an external review of HEIHEI in 2022.

We are also currently exploring options with TVNZ for the future of the HEIHEI brand and will update the sector on this in due course. All existing contract agreements will be maintained and if you have any questions about any yet-to-be-released HEIHEI content, please contact Ngawaero Maniapoto (Ngawaero.Maniapoto@tvnz.co.nz).

Annual budget allocation (2022 – 2023)

Children - Scripted	\$7,000,000
Children - Factual	\$8,000,000
Children - Interactive	\$1,000,000

³ [HEIHEI Brand Awareness – May 2022 – Kantar Research](#)

\$16,000,000

We intend to run two children’s content funding rounds across the financial year with estimated allocations as follows:

Round 1	July – September 2022	\$10,000,000
Round 2	March – May 2023	\$6,000,000

Digital reporting requirements

To enable us to fairly measure the impact of children’s content we will require producers and platforms to apply 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. We have used this approach in measuring the Public Interest Journalism Fund and it provides a standardised pan-sector approach to measurement that ensures fairness and openness to all involved.

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](#).