



Annual Report 2020/21



Hannah Middleton Chief Executive

FROM OUR CE

Whanganui & Partners is committed to improving our economy and prosperity and this Annual Report plainly reflects that intention as we review a time of adaptation and growth.

The past year has resulted in significant change for our local economy and for the business community, and it has been a period of considerable gains for Whanganui & Partners.

We unlocked \$700k in central government funding and embarked on a promotional campaign far bigger than we have ever undertaken before. We recognised the importance of concentrating our efforts on high-quality, targeted promotions to reflect the excellent experience Whanganui offers.

Our marketing team forged ahead with confidence and saw Whanganui's visitor industry thrive despite multiple lockdown periods nationally and ongoing border closures internationally. We celebrated having the best tourism growth in the country last year, in an exceptional contrast to a nationwide trend towards tourism loss.

Through the Regional Business Partners network, Whanganui & Partners distributed more than \$422,800 in funding and supported 269 local businesses. We were highly responsive and progressive as we helped the business community navigate the uncertainty Covid-19 created.

As we worked towards encouraging and championing our entrepreneurs, Whanganui & Partners introduced the Innovate competition and announced a \$25k prize pool allocation, in addition to mentorship and idea development for Innovate's competitors.

It has been a privilege to help local businesses survive and succeed through a challenging period, and to see them supported by the patronage and loyalty of locals.

Challenges are inherent when a region experiences growth at the rate we have. We are facing any difficulties head on and our goal of a thriving population with opportunities for all is closer than ever.

Ngā mihi, Hannah Middleton, Chief Executive



Pahia Turia Board Chair

FROM OUR CHAIR

Whanganui & Partners, together with collaborators and local businesses, continues to embark on projects buoyed by optimism and confidence. We are looking ahead to a year where the positive effects of the agency's actions compound, and the resulting gains contribute to Whanganui's increasing prosperity.

The innovative spirit is an essential component to business growth, and Whanganui & Partners has prioritised nurturing and supporting new initiatives while acknowledging the exceptional achievements and collegiality of our established business community.

Along with ongoing business support and provision of upskilling opportunities, the Innovate Whanganui project is testament to our dedication to maintaining Whanganui's reputation as a place where business is challenging, exciting and world leading.

We recognise the Whanganui business community's numerous strengths as we look back on a year which ended with record consumer spend, incredible tourism growth, exceptional population growth and a real estate market which shows no sign of slowing.

There has been a discernible shift in the way people talk about Whanganui, both at home and elsewhere. This well-deserved pride and enthusiasm for our place and our people inspires us.

There is no better time than now, there is no better place than here. We are privileged and compelled to do better, live better, and continue along this path to prosperity for Whanganui.

Ngā mihi, Pahia Turia, Board Chair

Our Board

PAHIA TURIA Board Chair

SUSANNE CLAY GAELLE DEIGHTON ANNE-MARIE BROUGHTON PHILLIP BEDFORD STEPHEN LEE Board Directors

Our Team

HANNAH MIDDLETON Chief Executive

NILESH PRASAD Executive Assistant & Administration Manager

TIM EASTON Strategic Lead – Business

COLLEEN SHELDON Strategic Lead – Agribusiness

SIMON PUTAN Business Growth Advisor

LOU TYSON WALKER Strategic Lead - Capability

PAUL CHAPLOW Strategic Lead – Visitor Industries JONATHAN SYKES Strategic Lead -Brand, Events & i-SITE

EMMA BUGDEN Strategic Lead -Creative Industries & Arts

ANIQUE JAYASINGHE Community Arts Coordinator

REBECCA BLACK Communications Executive

BILLIE LAWSON Visitor Centre Supervisor

DEBBIE BILL DONNA LINDSAY KERI-ANNE HAWIRA KEVIN TRAIL SASKIA BLOOT AIMEE ASHWORTH RIEKE HEIKENS SUNISA ZI-ER Visitor Centre Consultants

Acknowledgments

We would also like to show our appreciation for Gaelle Deighton, who acted as interim CE until December 2020, Whitney Cox, Katrina Langdon and Tobee Wallace.

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Statement of Service Provision

2020/21 IN WHANGANUI



Whanganui's rising population, house prices, visitor and consumer spend have continued their upward trajectory. We saw unemployment decline despite a contrary nationwide trend in the aftermath of Covid-19.

We welcomed new businesses, new events and new residents in the past year and saw average earnings improve significantly. Housing remains a theme as new home buyers find it challenging to enter the market and housing stocks are sought after. However, we have seen population growth result in highly skilled residents contributing to our region and businesses expanding in a favourable economic climate.

We also saw several challenges become opportunities. The closure of the Mars Pet Food factory was an anxiously anticipated development in December 2020. In February 2021, Farmland Foods purchased the manufacturing plant and started a commissioning phase to transition the factory to its food production requirements with sustainability in mind.







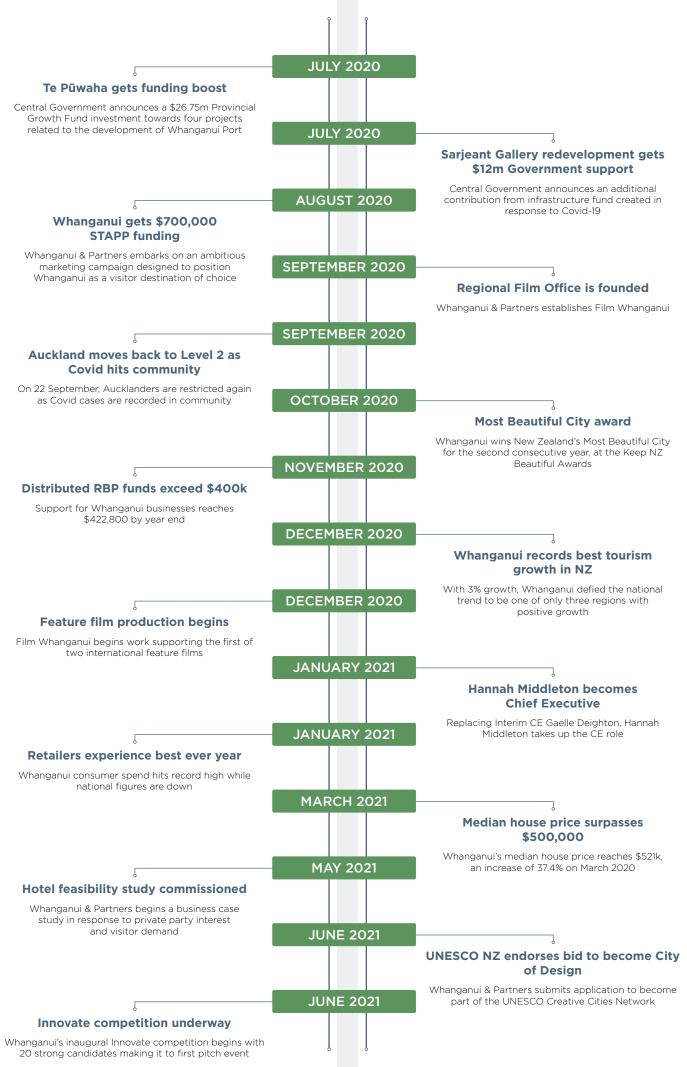




Biggest sectors contributing to our GDP:

12.3%	Manufacturing
10.4%	Healthcare & Social Assistance
7.3%	Public Administratio & Safety
7.5%	Agriculture, Forestry & Fishing

7.0% Retail Trade



WHANGANUI & PARTNERS Pūrongo-ā-tau 2020/21 5



WHO ARE WHANGANUI & PARTNERS?

We are the economic development agency and Regional Tourism Organisation of Whanganui. We manage the operation of the Whanganui i-SITE and are the founder of Film Whanganui, the Regional Film Office.

What do we do?

Our mission is to lead and drive richness and opportunity through business, education, and lifestyle. We work to promote Whanganui as a destination to live, visit, work, study and invest in. Our activities include supporting new and existing businesses, bringing events to Whanganui and providing the latest economic data, analysis and commentary on the Whanganui district.

Who do we do it with?

We consider collaboration and inclusiveness to be vitally important. We achieve our goals with the support and help of partners who share our vision for Whanganui. In addition to our key iwi partners Tūpoho, Tamaūpoko, Hinengākau, Ngaa Rauru Kiitahi, Ngā Wairiki Ngāti Apa and Ngā Tāngata Tiaki we work with:





How do we do it?

- Commitment to attracting, retaining and growing local business
- Promoting the region to attract new residents, visitors, businesses, investment and students
- Leveraging existing investment to unlock central government funding
- Attracting capital investment opportunities
- Co-operating with neighbouring regions for a cohesive approach to economic development for our broader area
- Identification and facilitation of growth in training and development opportunities for our workforce
- Managing the region's events fund
- Operate the Whanganui i-SITE Visitor Information Centre

You've heard from us, now we want to hear from you. How do you think we did over the 2020/21 financial year? Let us know at **discoverwhanganui.nz/annualreport**

WHAT DID WE DO LAST YEAR? We maximised our marketing

Following our biggest-ever marketing campaign last year, we measured a significant increase in web traffic to our visitor-dedicated websites. We invested in our promotional efforts more than we have ever done so before and we worked to continue our tourism growth trend.

We refined our messages and articulated our brand's strengths, collating our online identities into one and establishing a consistency of style and content to reflect Whanganui's character as a sought-after place to live, work, study and visit.



Left to right: Paul Chaplow (Strategic Lead – Visitor Industries), Richie McCaw, Gemma McCaw, Jonathan Sykes (Strategic Lead – Brands & Events).



FOCUS POINT: Marketing Discover Whanganui

As border closures and travel restrictions hit tourism nationally, Whanganui's visitor industry recorded growth in the face of adversity. Whanganui & Partners unlocked central government funding and leveraged it to maintain momentum in an industry where competition turned exclusively to the domestic market. We reacted with self-assurance as we promoted this incredible place and all it has to offer.

People in Auckland and Wellington were compelled to Discover Whanganui as images of our beautiful region impressed on billboards, in newspapers and in advertising all over their cities. We lost the 20% of our visitor market internationals account for, but tourism still grew by 3% - the best growth in New Zealand. Whanganui's success was noted by Government when it announced the upcoming round of funding for provincial tourism.

We opted to use \$700k in MBIE funding to grow Whanganui's profile on a significant scale. The Government's decision to support our region shows the progress we've made has been impactful and recognises the value of our growth in the long term.

The new round of funding the Government announced in May explicitly recognises that our region is worth investing in and has much to offer the tourism sector.

WHAT DID JOURNALISTS HAVE TO SAY ABOUT WHANGANUI?

It's like Amsterdam meets Napier.

Brook Sabin, Stuff

Inventive eateries, a hipster bar, an art precinct... When did Whanganui get so cool?

Sharon Stephenson, Scout magazine

It was only April, 2019, when Kiwis with itchy feet had the freedom and inclination to plot adventures in places like France or Fiji as opposed to Whanganui. New Zealand's 15th largest city (almost 50,000 people) was a little far down the list. Well, here's the thing: it shouldn't have been then and it definitely isn't now.

Tim Roxborogh, NZ Herald

Whanganui, famed for its beautiful storied river, is also home to a vibrant, thriving artistic community.

Eleanor Black, Kia Ora magazine

There's as much to enjoy in this compact river city for a few days as there is anywhere you'd care to name.

Neil Porten, NZ Herald

FOCUS POINT: Our character defined

Recognising, measuring and shaping the shift in Whanganui's perception requires many tools and varied approaches. We refreshed our website this year, and we grew our social media traffic and mainstream media presence to better reflect our character as a place of aspirations, innovations, creativity, beauty and purpose.

We chose to tell our story visually and supported our narrative with emotive language to articulate how fortunate we are to call this place home. We presented our people as the face of Whanganui, we celebrated our actions and achievements and we invited visitors to Discover our greatness.

We were intentional in our message - this is a prime destination to visit, live, work and do business. We succeeded in showing that Whanganui is a desirable place to be, and it is our fortune to be here.



website visitors to W&P sites in one year

35,572 🛇

social media followers across W&P platforms

WHAT DID WE DO LAST YEAR? We backed business growth

Optimism and enthusiasm have been high as our economy has continued to grow. We have been inspired by the resilience and confidence shown by our business community and Whanganui's economic profile is rising along with our population growth and industry expansion.

We have supported entrepreneurs and business start-ups with advice, funding, mentorship, encouragement, and opportunities to upskill. We have brought our business leaders together and examined what it is that makes success achievable.



\$422,800

distributed to local businesses for Covid-19 support



269

businesses supported through RBP funding ۳ 50

people through business start-up workshops

FOCUS POINT:

Innovate

This event is testing outstanding ideas with tough criteria and trying obstacles, it is enabling Whanganui's entrepreneurs to prove they have the innovative nous to succeed.

By delivering Innovate in collaboration with The Factory, from Palmerston North, we have been able to put our first round of entrepreneurs through the best possible inaugural competition as they develop their concepts and compete to win \$10k in seed funding at the Innovate awards night in September. The cash prize is a significant lure, but it is the mentorship and education provided to the competitors which gives them an advantage to take their innovations to market no matter what the competition's outcome is.

⁶⁶ Tenacity, endurance and self-belief are at the heart of every entrepreneur...The Factory has world class processes, years of experience and a playbook that will translate theory into positive action to benefit the entrepreneurs in local communities. We provide the tools, then Whanganui & Partners delivers Innovate in their own way.⁹⁹ Dave Craig, The Factory.



FOCUS POINT: The Backhouse on Taupō Quay

Our business team knows collaboration and association with likeminded people is the key to sustainable business practice. This was the impetus for the establishment of The Backhouse Trust, which is bringing businesses and institutions together in a multi-level working space on the corner of Drews Ave and Taupō Quay.

The Backhouse, the former UCOL A Block, is filling up fast as tenants recognise the value of being in a versatile building, with innovative neighbours, in our creative central business district.

The Backhouse has five tenants already under its roof and will be welcoming newcomers on board in the upcoming months.

⁶⁶ The mix of tenants at The Backhouse is a perfect representation of the eclectic nature that makes Whanganui so special. From a movie theatre to a wood-working studio, a youth employment facilitator to a dedicated space for local creatives, The Backhouse is full of innovation and possibility.⁹⁹ *Tim Easton, Strategic Lead – Business.* FOCUS POINT: LARFS@4

Agriculture benefits our local economy in immeasurable ways. The rural community contributes to our economy as primary industry leaders, in the uptake of innovation and technology, and in its contribution to our creative sector.

The facilitation of Lifestyle, Agribusiness, Rural and Farming Sessions (LARFS) recognised the broad range of contributions the farming sector makes and created an environment where rural people could share ideas, develop better skills and processes, and work towards building entrepreneurial capital in Whanganui's food and fibre sector.

Continuity is another theme central to the rural community's wellbeing and the provision of a Succession Planning Course gave rural families a chance to ensure a legacy, not a liability, awaits future generations.

WHAT DID WE DO LAST YEAR? We championed our creative industries

We have championed Whanganui's creative spirit with grants, mentorships, and defined career pathways.

We have celebrated our unique character by endorsing design and artistry through the media and interaction with institutions such as UNESCO.

We have led with our belief in Whanganui being a place where the exceptional is possible and where creative thinking is celebrated and exceptional.



The production supported more than **120** local accommodation, catering and service providers

FOCUS POINT: Making It

Our creative community is supportive, collaborative and generous in nature. Leveraging these qualities, Whanganui & Partners created the Making It programme to match business mentors with artists and designers to ensure prosperity develops alongside their portfolios of work and creation.

This popular project has built financial literacy and increased professional and commercial knowledge.

⁶⁶ So, so grateful!! Thanks so much to you, Whanganui & Partners and Niki (Vernon) for making this help available for me and many other artists to get the help we so badly need to get sorted with our creative business.⁹⁹ Angela Tier



focus point: Film Whanganui

The formation of Film Whanganui and its rapidly developed proficiency, on the back of facilitating two international film productions, excited and motivated us. Whanganui & Partners established the NZ Regional Film Office to support our local creatives and enable those employed in production to work in the place they live and love.

Assisting production of two significant films and two additional productions exceeded our expectations and affirmed our belief that anything is possible in this place of creativity and skill. International productions made a significant contribution, but they are not the only stars in the picture. Film Whanganui now has an online directory to connect industry playmakers and has helped with multiple projects as our reputation flourishes. Film Whanganui has embraced this year of opportunity and used it to demonstrate what is possible if we are prepared to be brave and willing.

⁶⁶ It's been a dream. We found this amazing farm, and everything hinged on finding that location. It wasn't easy, but we found what we wanted here in New Zealand and in Whanganui.⁹⁹ Jakob Jaffke, Producer, A24

WHAT DID WE DO LAST YEAR? We contributed to our people's capability

As our population has grown, we have worked to ensure our workforce can adapt with skills and labour to meet the market. We continued to support our partner 100% SWEET and worked with the Port Employment Precinct to establish vocational pathways for young people.

We promoted Whanganui as a great place to find employment and outlined our design and manufacturing strengths.

FOCUS POINT:

Agent famil

International students make an important contribution to our educational institutions, a reality well recognised as we witnessed the effects of Covid-19 on our tertiary providers.

In March, our Agent Famil brought ten agents to Whanganui to highlight our attractiveness as an international study destination. Maintaining these relationships is an essential task as we look to a future when studies abroad resume with renewed competition among providers. This Famil is crucial work towards our international education plan, which aims for growth in international student attraction and the resulting benefits for our tertiary education providers and the wider economy.



FOCUS POINT: Vocational road trips

Building on our future capability goals, we embarked on six Vocational Road Trips to introduce young people to Whanganui businesses and forge mutually beneficial relationships and career pathways.

This project saw us collaborate with the Local Skills & Talent Working Group and enabled us to work together towards a positive outcome for our young people, our economy, and communities.

We recognise the impact made on young people when they see industry in operation and believe it is vitally important to show them what is possible in Whanganui and retain the skills and contribution they offer our workforce.



2020 - 2021 Performance measurements

PRIORITY ONE: BUSINESS

OUTCOME: A thriving business community - Our businesses and sectors are adapting, innovating, growing and operating sustainably.

Objective	Key Performance Indicators	Status
Economic impact of COVID-19 on local large enterprise is minimised and they quickly recover and grow	Projects and initiatives to support the economic recovery of Whanganui businesses.	Achieved
	Engage regularly with sector to optimise retention and growth of our existing businesses	Achieved
	Partner with real estate and property developers to attract new enterprise to Whanganui.	Achieved
	Support Whanganui District Council to identify opportunities in land development, town planning and infrastructure.	Achieved
	Develop Logistics Strategy and Action Plan to increase connectivity to customers and export markets.	Activity Redirected
Small businesses have the tools to recover and grow sustainably	Develop business skills and capability in start-up founders	Substantially Achieved
	Deliver the Regional Business Partners Programme within Whanganui, Ruapehu and Marton.	Achieved

Objective	Key Performance Indicators	Status
New opportunities in the agribusiness sector increase productivity	Engage regularly with sectors to optimise retention and growth of our existing farming businesses.	Achieved
	Improve rural digital connectivity in the district.	Achieved
	Ensure that Agri-technology becomes more mainstream in this sector.	Achieved
	Maximise business continuation by supporting transition of farming businesses, including succession planning.	Achieved
	Capture more economic impact from our agricultural sector through value chain innovation.	Achieved
	Increase engagement with Māori landowners to grow the value of Māori agribusiness.	Achieved
	Work with primary sector employers to identify pathways for future workforce needs.	Achieved
Local businesses operate successfully within the digital environment	Facilitate the use of digital technologies and smart approaches to drive innovation and productivity	Achieved
Businesses capitalise on opportunities and connections available through Whanganui & Partners	Foster a culture of capital investment within Whanganui.	Achieved
	Utilise Business Friendly Process to attract, engage and retain new and growing businesses.	Achieved
	Develop a clear framework for the role Whanganui & Partners takes in helping deliver against the goals of 100% SWEET, Whanganui Chamber of Commerce, Te Manu Atatū, Whanganui Māori Regional Tourism Organisation, Mainstreet Whanganui and Thrive.	Achieved

PRIORITY TWO: EDUCATION AND CAPABILITY

OUTCOME: Our capability unlocked - Our workforce is skilled, engaged in lifelong learning and connected to opportunities.

Objective	Key Performance Indicators	Status
Education and training in Whanganui is a recognised pathway to employment	Support the connection between young people and Whanganui business to create strong information flow and opportunities for fulfilling employment within our focus sectors (other SL areas).	Achieved
	Partner with 100% SWEET and WDETT to deliver a programme of work targeted at reducing Whanganui's NEET's rate.	Achieved
	Develop with support from ENZ & the Central Regions an International Education plan for Whanganui based around Stabilising, Transforming & Growing International Education.	Substantially Achieved
	Develop a Business Innovation, Training and Talent Strategy for Whanganui which future programmes of work by Whanganui and Partners and our partners can deliver and invest in.	Achieved
Strength and diversity of education/ training provisions attracts local, regional, national and international students to study in Whanganui	Work collaboratively with education providers to grow their offerings and diversify the way these offerings are delivered.	Achieved
	Increase higher level education, research and innovation opportunities oriented around our "ports", both aero and sea, and our Manufacturing and Agribusiness sectors.	Achieved
	Leverage the strength in creative industries to increase student attraction to Whanganui.	Achieved
Capability: employment & redeployment strategies that work to rebuild a resilient Whanganui Workforce	Talent Connect	Achieved

PRIORITY THREE: MARKETING

OUTCOME: An aspirational brand – A distinguished, differentiated brand contributes to a strong reputation and experience, particularly for first-time visitors.

Objective	Key Performance Indicators	Status
The Whanganui brand is clearly defined and targeted	Develop overarching marketing and events strategies around a defined brand position, target audiences, competition and competitive advantages.	Achieved
Whanganui & Partners is perceived as a leader in economic development locally and regionally	Engagement with regional organisations to ensure collaboration and co-operation. E.g. Accelerate 25; Intelligent Communities	Achieved
	Promote Whanganui & Partners' economic development activities and expert commentary via local and regional media	Achieved
	Develop channels to directly engage with the community.	Achieved
Our competitive advantages attract new businesses, residents, visitors and students	Run effective advertising campaigns through a strong proposition and delivered through a multi-channel approach.	Achieved
	Develop clear propositions to demonstrate our competitive advantages to new business, residents, visitors and students.	Achieved
	Develop a Content Strategy that identifies an approach to gaining positive PR for Whanganui.	Achieved
	Deliver effective communication on ongoing basis to support all sector initiatives	Achieved
	 Upgrade key touchpoints for customers: Websites designed to attract new business, residents, visitors and students. Promotional signage including entrances into Whanganui city and district. i-SITE acts as a key point to first- time visitors to Whanganui. 	Substantially Achieved

Objective	Key Performance Indicators	Status
Our visitor experience is enhanced, leading to the recovery and growth in market share of nation-wide visitor spend	Deliver a destination management plan (DMP) that considers the future needs of tourism infrastructure to enable economic growth.	Achieved
	Scope an eco-cultural hub with key partners to provide greater opportunity for visitors to engage with Te Awa Tupua.	Achieved
	Develop the Coastal Arts Trail (CAT) alongside regional partners to strengthen our recognition of the arts.	Substantially Achieved
	Develop our boutique shopping experience as a visitor attraction, with Victoria Avenue highlighted prominently.	Achieved
	Identify and support initiatives that enhance our tourism experience, including the potential needs for new product and packaging of existing product.	Achieved
	Facilitate Google My Business (GMB) workshops to help local businesses operate successfully in the digital environment	Partially Achieved
Whanganui hosts nationally significant events that create long- term economic benefits and enhance our brand recognition	Develop and implement an events strategy designed to inform a future direction for the scale and type of events Whanganui needs to grow its brand. This includes analysing current event performance and infrastructure.	Achieved
	Increasing the impact of iconic events, particularly in regards to attracting visitors from outside of our district.	Achieved

PRIORITY FOUR: CREATIVE INDUSTRIES

OUTCOME: A creative identity - A strong and vibrant creative sector generates employment, grows innovation and enhances Whanganui's attractiveness

Objective	Key Performance Indicators	Status
The Arts & Culture Strategy is delivered through collaboration with individuals, hapū, community groups, funders, Council and other creative sector partners	Grow the profile of Whanganui as an arts and culture destination for tourism and business regionally and nationally.	Achieved
	Interface regularly with creative industry stakeholders, providing the sector with effective mechanisms to access relevant information about sector developments, funding opportunities and support available from W&P.	Achieved
	Grow and strengthen local creative infrastructure.	Achieved
	Promote the vocational pathways for creative industries and foster professional development and education opportunities.	Achieved
	Encourage new creative sector leaders.	Achieved
	Support networking opportunities with the Whanganui creative sector	Achieved
Community arts events attract visitors and enable growth of creative industries	Administer funding of community arts events that meet W&P event funding criteria	Achieved
	Administer funding of community arts funds	Achieved
	Support event organisers to develop and implement Marketing and Communications plan.	Achieved

Draft: Statement of Financial Performance 2020-2021

	Actual 2020/21	Budget 2020/21	
Whanganui District Council	2,595,594	2,595,594	
Finance revenue	-	_	
Subsidies and grants	893,560	126,000	
User fees and other revenue	-	-	
Personnel costs	705,826	955,611	
Depreciation and amortisation expense	10,987	10,987	
Finance costs	-	-	
Other expenses	2,245,668	1,479,562	
Capital Expenditure			
Acquisitions	-	-	
Replacements	-	_	

Notes:

1. Whanganui & Partners audited accounts are part of Councils Audited accounts and presented as part of Councils Annual Report (released in Oct 2021)

2. The above are indicative figures, capturing our activities for FY 2020-21.

You've heard from us, now we want to hear from you. How do you think we did over the 2020/21 financial year? Let us know at discoverwhanganui.nz/annualreport





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