



Submission to MCH

AMPLIFY

*A Creative and Cultural  
Strategy for New Zealand  
2024-2030*

15 December 2024

## Screen Producers New Zealand (Spada)

Established in 1982, Spada is the professional membership association for Aotearoa New Zealand's screen producers.

Spada represents the interests of producers and production companies on all issues that affect the commercial and creative aspects of independent screen production in Aotearoa New Zealand.

Spada's membership includes leading independent producers and production companies working in film, television, TVC, animation and interactive media, as well as professional service providers.

The screen sector, perhaps more than most, connects with a wide variety of other sectors, such as travel, tourism, hospitality, building and construction, catering and rental services, to name a few. As a result, it benefits a wide range of New Zealand businesses and individuals outside the sector.

Spada intersects with creative sector policy in its capacity as a member of WeCreate, the alliance of Aotearoa New Zealand's creative industry associations and organisations, representing 30,000+ Kiwi creators and creative businesses. Spada worked closely with WeCreate during the development of its [Action Plan](#) for the Creative Sector<sup>1</sup>.

Over the last 12 months Spada's work has focussed on:

**- lobbying to help mitigate the impact of a \$50m loss from the sector caused by a devastating drop in advertising revenue at our two main free-to-air broadcasters – our advocacy** resulted in NZOA and TMP being exempted from the 7.5% budget cuts; an adjustment to the Domestic NZSPR criteria to allow Shortland Street to qualify, and Sunday morning advertising for TVNZ and Three. Given this year's loss of \$50million from the funding eco-system, the Screen Production Rebate is more crucial than ever to New Zealand producers. Export success and being able to access offshore financing is now key to delivering projects of scale in New Zealand. For NZ producers, the Rebate can be the difference between a project happening or not, enabling more ambitious, globally competitive productions and building a stronger, more sustainable industry in New Zealand.

**- investment in further export success** – to build on the success of the Premium Production Fund, which was an investment of \$50m by the government to deliver [world-class screen content](#) – Spada proposes the establishment of an ongoing export-focussed premium production fund (with a budget of \$20m). This fund would empower the sector to continue achieving significant outcomes, including attracting international financing, increasing exports, developing New Zealand intellectual property, enhancing soft power, and contributing to New Zealand's GDP.

**- regulation of the international TV streaming services** – a robust and healthy domestic screen sector is essential for preserving the NZ voice, and for servicing the larger international productions that come here and make money for NZ. Some form of regulation on the streamers will create a more level playing field for the NZ screen eco-system, given the negative impact

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<sup>1</sup> Spada's President is a member of WeCreate's Steering Group, and its Executive Director is a member of its Working Group.

these businesses have had on audiences and on local advertising revenue – which has resulted in our two biggest broadcasters spending \$50m less on local content this year.

- **Nurturing talent** – Spada has engaged in extensive consultation with **Toi Mai**, the screen sector’s WDC under ROVE to help support better training outcomes, and career pathways for our screen sector. Spada also ran various training initiatives to support emerging and new talent (including this year’s inaugural Emerging Producer Award at the 2024 Spada Screen Industry Awards).

- **Copyright Act** – the last round of consultation that Spada was engaged with was in 2019. See Spada’s submissions below:

- **Spada Submission on Copyright Act Review Issues Paper**
- **Joint Submission on Copyright Act Review Issues Paper**
- **Film and Music Sector Position Paper on Copyright Act**

Spada has been part of the restructuring work recently undertaken by the NZFC, including its terms of trade and development review.

In summary, Spada welcomes the Government’s draft Amplify Strategy. The screen sector is:

- focussed on maximising value of funding
- nurturing new talent and looking for new voices
- looking at ways to do better or look at ways to improve policies, guidelines, legislation to help support growth and resilience
- deeply engaged with the international marketplace
- export focussed
- creating local content that works locally and globally.

Spada looks forward to working with the Government to continue to build and leverage on our success stories, as well as engage further on the upcoming Media Modernisation work programme.

Spada’s responses to the Strategy’s specific questions are addressed below.

## *What do you think of the Vision as an overall goal for the creative and cultural sectors?*

Spada welcomes the Strategy and believes it's important for the creative and cultural sector to have a shared vision. We believe New Zealand's creative sector delivers on the local and global stage but can see where there are further opportunities to maximise investment, which are detailed in this submission.

## *Can you see your sector in the Vision?*

As highlighted in the snapshot of Spada's latest work programme, and further detailed in the 2030 Screen Sector Strategy, there are numerous intersections where the screen sector aligns with the Vision.

## *What do you think of the targets? Are they useful and achievable?*

- New Zealand ranks among the top 25 nations in the world for culture and heritage soft power, resulting in high-value cultural tourism and exports.
- More New Zealanders are actively engaging with New Zealand arts, culture and heritage.
- The GDP contribution of the arts and creative sector increases to at least \$20 billion, with a focus on exports.
- The median income for creative professionals more closely matches the median income for New Zealanders earning a wage or salary.

The targets are broad, which likely contributes to their achievability. Some have said they could be more ambitious—particularly the GDP target of at least \$20 billion. A strength of the targets is their interconnectedness. Commerce and creativity are closely linked: GDP growth boosts median incomes, enhances visibility, drives exports, and fosters cultural tourism. This, in turn, encourages greater public engagement.

Despite a significant reduction in funding for the screen sector this year, New Zealand's creative GDP grew by 5.3% in 2023, surpassing the overall economy's growth rate of 2.9%. This highlights substantial potential for further expansion.

Spada notes the strong engagement of New Zealanders with screen content, at 69%. Following the success of the Premium Production Fund and the Government's adjustments to the NZ Domestic Rebate, we believe this is the moment to continue to invest in the screen sector to build on this momentum.

We acknowledge the Minister's interest in encouraging new private investment in the sector. However, there is a strong case for targeted government investment to capitalize on the increasing demand for distinctive local content—content that is developed, produced, and created within New Zealand and holds international appeal.

The Prime Minister has expressed a desire for New Zealand to regain its 'mojo.' Few things resonate more powerfully, both locally and globally, than a hit film or TV show that captures the hearts and minds of audiences.

The projects funded through the Premium Production Fund are strong indicators of the results that can be achieved through further investment.

*After the Party* is a good example of that. It has been a significant cultural and critical success, generating substantial international attention and positive media coverage. Its powerful narrative and standout performances, particularly by Robyn Malcolm, have earned accolades in Australia, the UK, and France. Critics in the UK, including those from *The Guardian* and *The Telegraph*, have compared it favourably to acclaimed series like *Mare of Easttown* and *Happy Valley*, describing Malcolm's role as one of the year's best TV performances and suggesting it deserves major awards such as a BAFTA.

While it's challenging to quantify the exact value of the publicity generated, the strong reviews and widespread discussion, position the show as a major export for New Zealand television, akin to other global successes like *Top of the Lake*. This buzz, combined with international syndication on platforms like Channel 4 in the UK and ABC in Australia, likely equates to millions in equivalent advertising value, raising awareness of New Zealand's creative industry and talent.

There are many other examples: *MADAM* has sold in multiple territories including Australia and Asia/Pacific. It has won awards at the Monte Carlo Festival, and picked up Best Comedy at the Berlin TV Awards, and Best Pilot at the Rhode Island International Film Festival.

*THE BROKENWOOD MYSTERIES* has just wrapped its 10th season and has sold to over 100 countries. *MY LIFE IS MURDER*, *UNDER THE VINES* and *FAR NORTH* are also selling around the world.

*NZ TRAITORS* has won Best Adaptation of Existing Format, Asian Academy Creative Awards 2024, Bronze Award 'Best Host', Paul Henry, New York Festivals Film & TV Awards 2024, and is one of only three versions of the show (including the US and Australia) on BBC's iPlayer. Long-running factual series *BORDER PATROL* has sold into 52 countries, and *TRACKED* has sold in 16 territories, including the UK and US, and become the first NZ series to be picked up by MAX.

Other export successes are detailed under Appendix I.

**More New Zealanders engaging with arts, culture & heritage:** excellence drives engagement. We believe New Zealand already is a global creative powerhouse. But to remain competitive to ensure we can compete globally we have to continue to invest in our future. Invest in the potential, the future wealth generation that a \$16bn sector generates. A sector that could grow to well over \$20bn in GDP contribution.

In the past five years, productivity in the creative sector has grown by 3% per year on average, compared to 0.2% for the total economy. The ROI for investment in the screen industry is 6 to 1.

**Median Income:** The screen sector is slightly above the median income bracket – improving and building on the screen sector helps raise the median income for creative professionals. Funding production is a clear pathway to training on the job. The pandemic highlighted that connection very clearly.

## *What do you think of the three strategic pillars?*

The strategic pillars are broad and flexible, providing ample opportunity for alignment. The screen sector is well-positioned to deliver on these objectives.

### **1 Investing for maximum impact** - *Government investment, including the \$450 million investment in Vote Arts, Culture and Heritage maximises value for New Zealand from the creative and cultural sectors.*

The screen sector generates close to \$4bn per annum, and, as referenced in the AMPLIFY strategy “69% of New Zealanders actively engaged with New Zealand-made screen content in 2023”.

International spending on film and television has increased from US\$189b in 2019 to US\$220b in 2020. The international media and entertainment sector is set to continue year on year growth, with revenue predicted to approach US\$3tn by 2026 off a base of US\$2.5tn in 2022.<sup>[13]</sup>

The Rebate’s ROI is 6 to 1 (two separate economic reports have arrived at this ROI – [Olsberg Report](#)). The budgets from film and TV productions are spent across a wide variety of other sectors, such as travel, tourism, hospitality, building and construction, catering and rental services, to name a few. As a result, investment and support for the screen sector benefits a wide range of New Zealand businesses and individuals.

### **Maximising Investment**

> There are some small adjustments to the Domestic Screen Production Rebate that would improve its impact, both for local platforms and local production. These changes could include reducing the 250k threshold, reducing the non-govt percentage to reflect lower network license fees, and making local versions of international format productions eligible for the 20% rebate.

> Stronger collaboration with other export focussed programmes run by other government agencies. For example, NZTE used to provide financial support for production companies attending key European markets, such as MIPCOM and MIPTV. Given the constraints of our domestic market, engagement with the international market is crucial. NZTE currently has 200 private sector advisors in its Beachheads program, which offers strategic business advice and access to decision makers in offshore markets. It also has a co-funding programme called the International Growth Fund.

> Data: MBIE’s [Economic Trends in the New Zealand Screen Industry](#) (February 2024) is based on a dataset spanning 2011 to 2021. To accurately articulate the current state of our sector, it is crucial to ensure we have access to up-to-date and relevant data.

### **2 Nurturing talent** - Supporting New Zealand’s creative and cultural talent pipeline and sustainable career opportunities.

As one producer succinctly put it, “Invest in product – and producers can invest in talent”. Having a robust domestic screen industry is key to supporting the next generation of talent.

Creatives, new talent, work on projects – they work with producers to develop ideas. From script to screen – investment in our local content kicks off the value chain. Without producers making

programmes of scale and having a sustainable business there is no opportunity for graduates to move into the workforce.

It follows that success, although elusive, is repeatable. And from that it follows that the best strategy for anyone investing in these industries is to invest in success.

In creative terms, this means funding sequels and follow-up works by successful creative teams. In business and policy terms, it means backing proven content creators and helping them build sustainable production businesses.

For the funding agencies, this could involve some re-weighting of funding allocations, away from project-to-project decision making and in favour of enterprise funding, with the goal of promoting continuity and sustainability.

RoVE/Toi Mai work to date includes:

- > establishment of a new micro-credential for screen was established
- > a national pilot programme tailored to new entrants to the screen sector has been developed which combines on-the-job training with online and on-campus learning through the delivery of new screen skill standards; and
- > refinement of existing qualifications to ensure they meet the current and future needs of learners and sector alike through the revised New Zealand Certificates in Screen Industry Craft Skills.
- > discussion on how to support training and development throughout careers, particularly within the 'gig economy' where most are sole traders with few large companies providing jobs and ongoing training.
- > In addition to participating in consultation rounds and working groups, Spada has made submissions on the following:

- Vocational Education Reforms Consultation (September 2024)
- Draft Workforce Development Plan for the Toi Pāho Above-the-Line Workforce, Te Waha o Tāne (June 2024)
- Draft Te Wao Nui a Toi Workforce Development Plan Below the Line (April 2023)

Spada also supported Toi Mai's two key reports for the screen sector **Te Waha o Tāne workforce development plan** (2024) above-the-line workforce (producers, directors and writers) and **Te Wao Nui o Toi** (2023) below-the-line workforce (production crew roles).

### **3. Reducing barriers to growth** - Modernising and streamlining government regulation so it enables the creative and cultural sectors to thrive.

As detailed earlier in Spada's work programme, we are engaged with the Copyright Review and look forward to the Media Modernisation work programme which will include work (we understand) on the Broadcasting Act. We are also exploring how regulation – on international streamers – can help our sector survive and thrive.

The 2030 Screen Sector Strategy echoed the screen sector's endorsement and support for modernising and streamlining regulation so that it better reflects the creative and cultural sectors and supports its growth and resilience. Some of the key points made in that strategy, which are echoed in the Amplify Strategy, were:

1. **Modernize Sector Regulations:**

- *Work with the Government to modernise the regulation that shapes the sector, including the Broadcasting Act.*

2. **Boost Business Growth and Acumen:**

- *Implement enterprise training and development programs to strengthen the scale and capability of screen businesses; and*

3. **Secure New and Strengthen Existing Funding:**

- *Optimize the Screen Production Grant to improve accessibility and encourage local talent engagement.*
- *Encourage private and international investment in screen projects.*

We also identified the gap created by a 'data void' for the screen industry, created by the discontinuation of the Stats NZ Screen Sector Survey. It was recommended to reinstate a survey to assess the sector's performance and progress.

*What do you think of the principles?*

Spada welcomes the five principles guiding Amplify that reflect the Government's commitment to the creative and cultural sectors.

Spada can see the Government is focussed on delivering value for money and investing for high impact outcomes. Spada's submission to the 2023 SSS, outlined five key principles, one of them being '**Culture and Business go hand in hand**'<sup>2</sup>.

A hit film or TV show can showcase a culture but what matters over time is the body of work, the continuity, a creative community, one generation leading to the next. Business success is crucial to this continuity. Similarly, creative innovation doesn't happen in a vacuum, it builds on – and departs from – what came before. Once again, continuity matters, and business success is the guarantor of continuity.

Business success > continuity > culture > innovation

For individual content creators, success in business is what enables the creation of a body of work, the chance to develop bigger projects, and take bigger creative risks.

We welcome creative policies that recognise the interdependence of culture and business. One without the other is not sustainable; the two together are hard to beat.

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<sup>2</sup> Spada's [submission](#) on the 2030 Screen Sector Strategy.



## CONCLUSION

As outlined at the beginning of this submission, Spada welcomes the Government's draft Amplify Strategy. The screen sector is:

- focussed on maintaining or growing funding levels and maximising their value
- exploring ways to enhance policies, guidelines, and legislation to foster growth and strengthen resilience
- deeply engaged with the international marketplace
- export focussed; and constantly developing and creating local content that works both locally and globally; and
- nurturing new talent and looking for new voices.

We look forward to working with the Government to continue to build and leverage on our global success stories, as well as engage further on the upcoming Media Modernisation work programme.

If you have any questions about Spada's submission please do not hesitate to get in touch.

Nga mihi,

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## **Export Success Stories: A Snapshot**

### **Premium Production Fund Te Puna Kairangi**

The drama series [After the Party](#) has had rave reviews here and abroad, with Robyn Malcolm's performance being compared with Kate Winslet in *Mare of Easttown* and Frances McDormand in *Olive Kitteridge*. The series has been seen on the ABC in Australia and Channel 4 in the UK. [Robyn won Best Actress at the Series Mania Festival](#) in France.

Quirky true story drama [Far North](#) has also been well reviewed and is screening internationally. It won the New York Festivals Film and TV Awards Best Direction award for David White.

[Madam](#) - starring Golden Globe winner Rachel Griffiths - has won the [Golden Nymph for Best Creation 2024 at the Monte Carlo TV Festival](#), and Best Comedy Series at the Berlin TV Series Festival.

Award-winning family horse drama [Mystic](#) has bolted out and is screening in around 75 countries. Quirky comedy [Creamerie](#) is screening in the US (on Hulu) and in Australia and France. It has also attracted very positive reviews.

And aside from the PPF productions, other New Zealand shows also continue to sell well around the globe - [Wellington Paranormal](#) and [The Brokenwood Mysteries](#) are both screening in over 100 countries. [Under the Vines](#) series three has just launched in all Acorn territories (which includes the US, Canada, and Spain). [My Life is Murder](#) has sold to 90 countries. Factual series [Border Patrol](#) screens in around 50 territories across the globe, and [Motorway Patrol](#) is in about 20.

Comedies [Kid Sister](#) and [Good Grief](#) have had strong reviews and international sales. Animated preschool children's series [Kiri and Lou](#) has been streamed over 21 million times in the UK since it first appeared on the BBC's iPlayer service, it's been broadcast in over 15 countries, including on Nickelodeon USA, and secured a BAFTA nomination. LGBTQI+ drama series [Rūrangi](#) won an [International Emmy Award](#) and is still screening abroad, including Hulu in the US.

Feature film [Bookworm](#) has picked up the 2024 Fantasia International Film Festival's audience award for best international feature. Meanwhile, Upgrade Productions recently acquired the worldwide rights to [The Mountain](#) ahead of its North American premiere at the Toronto International Film Festival.

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