

ART – Arts Regional Trust | Te Taumata Toi-a-iwi

## ART Venture Programme

*What difference is it making?*

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## 1. Executive Summary

- 1.1 In 2014/15, a small research project was undertaken to explore the impact of ART Venture on creative entrepreneurs in Auckland who are now alumni of the programme. The research collected quantitative and qualitative data to provide the ART Trust Board with information about the programme's effect, seven years on. For TBI Assist's ART Venture delivery team, the research identified positive trends to strengthen and some weaknesses to eliminate for continuous improvement.
- 1.2 ART and The Big Idea Trust<sup>1</sup> want to understand what difference the programme is making not just while participants are on the programme but also when they have become alumni and are no longer direct recipients of interventions such as mentoring and coaching. We are also keen to understand which programme elements appear to build resilience, viability and success for creative entrepreneurs working in Auckland's arts / creative economy.
- 1.3 A creative element of the data-collecting phase of the research was using video recording to generate data and to produce short videos about the programme for online broadcast and for showing at conferences. Independent contractors assisted with data collection including the online survey, the facilitation of focus groups and the production and editing of the video material.
- 1.4 A majority of programme alumni, 2007 - 2012 agreed to participate in the research. We learned about the positive impact that the programme continued to have on alumni including the achievements and viability of their current organisations. As well, alumni readily described the confidence, skills development and leadership actions that are strongly influenced by their participation in ART Venture.
- 1.5 Although this research project is small in scale due to limited resources, the key findings drawn from across the research methods used, suggest that ART Venture delivers tangible and significant change to its participants; that ART Venture does indeed make a difference that is positive and that this change ripples into the organisations that alumni lead and more widely into Auckland's creative ecology / economy.
- 1.6 In practice, the research suggests that the continuously evolving design of the programme is maintaining pace with change in New Zealand's creative economy, through for example the impact of and opportunities afforded by digital technology. The research also shows the commitment of programme alumni to connect and engage with each other long-term and to remain part of the ART Venture alumni community.
- 1.7 This research project was undertaken without a clear or pre-determined view of what the results would show. The key findings emerging from the online survey and the focus groups are encouraging – and the videos inspire through hearing the alumni describe in their own words, what the programme has enabled for them.
- 1.8 From the international research undertaken as part of the research, ART Venture appears to be a unique innovation with no other programme in its category in the UK, Canada or the US delivering the holistic development programme that in the ART Venture context appears to be crucial to the acceleration of its participants. This is an area for further research in a global context.

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<sup>1</sup> TBI Assist is the professional services arm of The Big Idea | Te Aria Nui Trust

## 2. Introduction

### Background

- 2.1 Arts Regional Trust (ART) is the programme owner of ART Venture, a unique acceleration programme that brings together arts, business, education and investment communities to back creative, entrepreneurial practitioners and producers working in the Auckland region who are keen to contribute to Auckland's arts, cultural and economic development.
- 2.2 The yearlong programme provides start-up and experienced creative entrepreneurs with a flexible yet intensive action-learning environment that, through peer-to-peer support, specialist coaching, and customised content accelerates the creative, professional and enterprise / business development of each participant.<sup>2</sup>
- 2.3 Now in its seventh year and sixth programme, ART Venture has established itself as a vital and sought after leadership and enterprise development programme for creative entrepreneurs<sup>3</sup> drawn from all disciplines of Auckland's arts, culture and creative sectors. It targets those who are serious about growing their business skills, accumen and strategy to build viable and sustainable projects and organisations (that in the longer term deliver a strong mix of personal and public benefits).
- 2.4 However, *what difference is the programme making?* In 2014/15, the professional services arm of The Big Idea Trust, TBI Assist<sup>4</sup> was contracted by Arts Regional

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<sup>2</sup> Appendix One summarises the structure of the 2015 ART Venture Programme

<sup>3</sup> Appendix Two describes how the role of a "creative entrepreneur" is defined and used within the ART Venture Programme

<sup>4</sup> TBI Assist team: Elisabeth Vaneveld (Project Leader); Viv Stone (Producer: Video case-studies); Abigail Greenwood (Director / Editor: Video case-studies); Susan Haldane (Focus Group Facilitator); Melanie Weeks (Desk-top researcher; focus group organiser); Craig Barlow & Margaret Lewis (Research assistants – online survey)

Trust (ART) to undertake a research project to address that question.

### What the research project sought to do

- 2.5 In seeking to learn more the impact that the programme has made and is continuing to make for alumni of the programme, ART was keen:
  1. To identify and explore what the longer term outcomes of the programme are for alumni of the programme as identified by them in the context of their current (i.e. 2014/15) career, professional and business realities, goals and aspirations
  2. To understand in the context of programme design what the benefit of hindsight suggests are the strongest features of the programme and what therefore, the elements of the programme are that may need to be reviewed for their relevance and/or role in generating or contributing to longer term outcomes
  3. To produce a base-line picture of the programme and its impact, seven years since it was launched in order to contribute to the body of knowledge about the fostering of creative entrepreneurship in New Zealand's professional arts/creative sector
  4. To produce video snapshots highlighting the experience of selected creative entrepreneurs who are now alumni of the programme and who are making a difference through their creative enterprises to Auckland.
- 2.6 The main objectives of the research project were:
  - A. To uncover how participants describe the change and effect that the programme has had on them in the context of such things as:
    - Confidence levels as a creative entrepreneur and as the leader of an organisation and/or major project that is engaged in business development
    - Development and growth of reputation in the field and related sectors

- Willingness to take personal and business risks
  - Pursuing opportunities outside immediately familiar networks, groups and communities
  - Growth in financial viability
  - Personal development as creative entrepreneur
  - Level and growth of connections and collaboration opportunities as a result of the programme (including through peers, mentors and the facilitation team)
- B. To identify the ways in which ART Venture alumni (and current participants) are contributing to Auckland's creative ecology via outcomes and value that flow across a number of dimensions, including financial, social, cultural and environmental goals and aspirations
- C. To reveal how ART Venture has impacted on the personal and professional development of participants in the context of their business, enterprise and/or organisational development
- D. To document some of the success stories that participants identify for themselves so that the alumni featured in these stories can disseminate their case-study into their networks, and ART can use a compilation in the form of a video portrait of AVP's impact over seven years for its own promotional purposes

### Two inter-linking approaches

- 2.7 In order to deliver these objectives, it was proposed that the project be developed as two inter-linking pieces of work:
1. A research project that used (and triangulated) three research methods to uncover data that addressed the main research question:
    - *What difference does ART Venture make to the personal, professional and business development of creative entrepreneurs who have completed the programme?*
  2. A series of short video productions that together and individually convey impressions about the impact and importance of ART Venture.

### 3. How the research was undertaken

#### Research Plan

- 3.1 The overarching research question underpinning the research phase of the project was:

*What difference does ART Venture make to the personal, professional and business development of creative entrepreneurs who have completed the programme?*

- 3.2 A multi-faceted research approach was undertaken in the research phase in order to facilitate a deeper understanding of how being on the ART Venture programme had made a difference to a range of creative entrepreneurs who had completed it. The aim was to draw information (data) from the three research projects undertaken in order to produce a rich, robust and comprehensive account of how alumni viewed the contribution and impact of the programme on them.

- 3.3 As each research project was activated, supplementary questions, respondent lists and other key information were noted in a research plan, which was continuously updated as new material came to hand. The final version of the research plan, which has been amended for this report is in Appendix Three: ART Venture Alumni Research Plan.

#### Quality Assurance

- 3.4 A best practice approach was undertaken to deliver all aspects of the project, within the limitations of available resources.

Consideration was given to:

- The design and preparation of the research projects that comprised the first phase of the project

- The design and delivery of the video components of the project delivered as the second phase of the project
- The design and preparation of the communication plan to ART Venture alumni.

Sensitive information provided to TBI Assist that was relevant to the project and to the affairs of ART Venture alumni who participated in the project and/or to ART (in the context of ART Venture) has remained confidential.

- 3.5 Where formal consent was required to safeguard the interests of participants who were involved in an aspect of the project that will have a public distribution element (i.e. the video material), informed consent was obtained, along with the formal release of any visual material that has been used.

- 3.6 Quality control for the project was provided through the following:

1. Grounding the project in existing material relevant to the development, implementation and evaluation of ART Venture
2. Consultation and engagement with ART's nominated representative to ensure that the objectives of the project were advanced and/or modified where that is appropriate
3. Checking back with Candy Elsmore, ART Project Director as necessary that plans and processes to be used during the project were credible and strong, and that the people to be involved were properly briefed at the outset about the project and its objectives.

## 4. Drawing from the research data

### Addressing the key research question

- 4.1 The research data was collected via three research methods as outlined in Appendix Three. In this research report, the data generated by each research method is described in the relevant appendices as follows:

Appendix Four: Learning from other places and people

Appendix Five: ART Venture Alumni Project // Online Survey 2014 Summary Report

Appendix Six: ART Venture Alumni Project // Summary Report 2014 Focus Groups

The data and information in each research report was then analysed to seek answers to the key research question that was set at the outset of the project:

*What difference does ART Venture make to the personal, professional and business development of creative entrepreneurs who have completed the programme?*

We then looked for commonalities across each set of findings to produce a list of general findings that are supported by the data collected across at least two of the research methods.

### Key findings

#### ONE // THE RIPPLE EFFECT – INFLUENCE OF PROGRAMME SINCE LEAVING

##### Key Finding #1:

- What was experienced, learned and applied while on the ART Venture Programme continues to influence past participants, now alumni, in their current realities and situations. This effect has a 'ripple' element to it as individual alumni continue to activate and distribute their ART Venture experiences, results and outcomes into many elements of their work and development as creative entrepreneurs.

- 4.2 A large majority of respondents said that ART Venture made a *critical/important contribution* to the *development* of their business. Most had not changed roles since completing ART Venture. However, many respondents reported that things have changed for them. For some, although their title had not changed, their role had changed for the better. Others reported that their role was still called the same as it was when they were on the programme; but since then, that role had changed its focus significantly. A significant number of respondents said that things have changed in ways that they could not have predicted – from winding up an operation to taking a performance to global stages and amazing reviews.

#### TWO // BUSINESS ACUMEN

##### Key Finding #2:

- Being on the ART Venture Programme accelerates the business and enterprise development of each participant including their business organisations, be they in the for-profit or social enterprise space.
- 4.3 Many respondents appeared to have moved out of a seeding/start-up phase into established or expansion or mature phases of their organisational growth and enterprise / business development. As well, when considering where they are *now* in their business or enterprise development, a large number of respondents reported that ART Venture made a critical and/or important contribution to the development of their business.
- 4.4 Overall, the majority of organisations and businesses that the respondents represented had an increase in income following their ART Venture experience. Almost all respondents (bar one) provided information about how the income of their organisation or business had changed. Six reported an increase in the bottom line of over 100 percent; three over 50 percent; three

between 26 and 50 percent; two between 16 and 25 percent, and five between 1 and 15 percent. Ninety percent of respondents reported that they have a *viable* business / enterprise.

- 4.5 Forty-one percent said that their financial position was going to plan or better than expected while 30 percent had concerns about their organisation's financial position (though it was viable), which were being managed. Just under a third of respondents were reinvesting back into their organisation's business activities.

### THREE // IMPACT ON PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT AND CONFIDENCE

#### Key Finding #3:

- Being a participant on and alumni of the ART Venture Programme builds confidence, which continues to grow, to develop and to have an impact long after leaving the programme. Its overall effect and impact gives participants (and then alumni) the confidence they need to succeed in their chosen direction, ambition or goals.
- 4.6 Many respondents said that the programme had helped them to see their personal, professional and business strengths and weaknesses more clearly and to personally grow in ways that had been positive for business life. A picture emerges of respondents having more tools (in their metaphorical kit bags) and much more confidence and therefore resilience to deal with challenging situations.
- 4.7 When asked which elements of the ART Venture programme contributed to where a respondent was now in relation to their business or enterprise, it is clear that a number of elements, working in concert, provided the *confidence* required to get to the "now of 2014/15". For example, core elements included high scoring items such as:
- Learning about my own strengths and weaknesses

- Helping my peers on the programme to solve their challenges
- Understanding myself as a creative entrepreneur
- Working closely with a mentor (on the AVP team)
- Being encouraged to take risks
- Learning from my peers on the programme.

### FOUR // CONNECTIONS AND NETWORKING

#### Key Finding #4:

- One key to participants accelerating while on the ART Venture Programme is accessing new networks for coaching, mentoring and investment opportunities; these connections continue to develop and grow as participants become ART Venture alumni.
- 4.8 One key to the success of ART Venture is as a 'connector' to specialist mentors and coaches that a number of alumni have remained in contact with since completing the programme for advice, stimulation and friendship. As well, a large majority of participants in any given ART Venture year have remained in touch with each other's progress, providing peer-to-peer support when needed.

### FIVE // LEADERSHIP IN AUCKLAND'S CREATIVE ECOLOGY

#### Key Finding #5:

- ART Venture is not only a creative enterprise / business acceleration programme; it is also strongly focused on the development of existing and future leaders in New Zealand's creative arts, economy and ecology
- 4.9 For most respondents, the organisation they identified with in 2014 when they participated in this research project is the organisation they were involved in when they completed their participation in the ART Venture programme. This suggests that ART Venture alumni are in organisations and / businesses



that are effectively working through various challenges evident in Auckland's arts / creative sector – and that for some at least new opportunities are sought and developed successfully. Many respondents reported change within their organisations, which also in some instances changed their role as leaders, managers and producers.

4.10 Although this research project did not assess the degree to which individual ART Venture alumni are considered by their peers to be leaders in the arts / creative sector now, anecdotally and informally it is evident that many alumni are moving into positions of leadership and influence not only in their organisations but in the field(s) in which that organisation sits. This is very encouraging for the future.

## SIX // ART VENTURE – A WORLD-CLASS INNOVATION

### Key Finding #6:

- The ART Venture Programme is unique in that it would seem from the research undertaken so far, that the wholistic approach to the design and delivery programme is not readily evident in other programmes that are also in the 'creative entrepreneurship' space.

4.11 However, as Appendix Four documents, some programmes in other places, most notably in the United Kingdom and Canada, do offer degrees of customisation to meet the individual needs of their participants. Some also offer, as ART Venture does, pitching processes. However, those that do appear to provide that opportunity do so in a competitive space across a participant cohort, which ART Venture does not.

