

ARUP

Commonwealth Arts & Culture

A new network of spaces

Prepared for The Commonwealth Resounds

January 2026


ARUP
Celebrating cultural diversity
Sharing knowledge & resources
Developing skills
Empowering communities
across the Commonwealth…


ARUP
…through a new network of venues…


ARUP
…founded in partnerships that twin
Commonwealth arts operators

What is the Commonwealth Arts and Culture Network?

We seek to create a **new network of arts centres** to support cultural exchange and mutual development using the creative economy across the Commonwealth of Nations.

Beginning with a pilot that will draw on a thriving cultural partnership between Samoa and Auckland, established by The Commonwealth Resounds, this fascinating project will place cultural investment in historically under-represented areas and support new generations of artists.

To date we have identified our core team.

Commonwealth Creative and Performing Arts (*including The Commonwealth Resounds and Commonwealth Dance*) and Revere Arts will partner with global design and engineering firm Arup, and also with Solfa, a musical organisation in Samoa and the Auckland Philharmonia.

We are seeking funding partners to support the project through it its next phase, conducting site feasibility investigations and developing the technical concept.

We are also keen to engage with cultural partners in other Commonwealth regions who can see opportunities to expand our network of arts centres.

Creating Cultural Centres

Culture is a key economic contributor which can connect and enrich the lives of everyone.

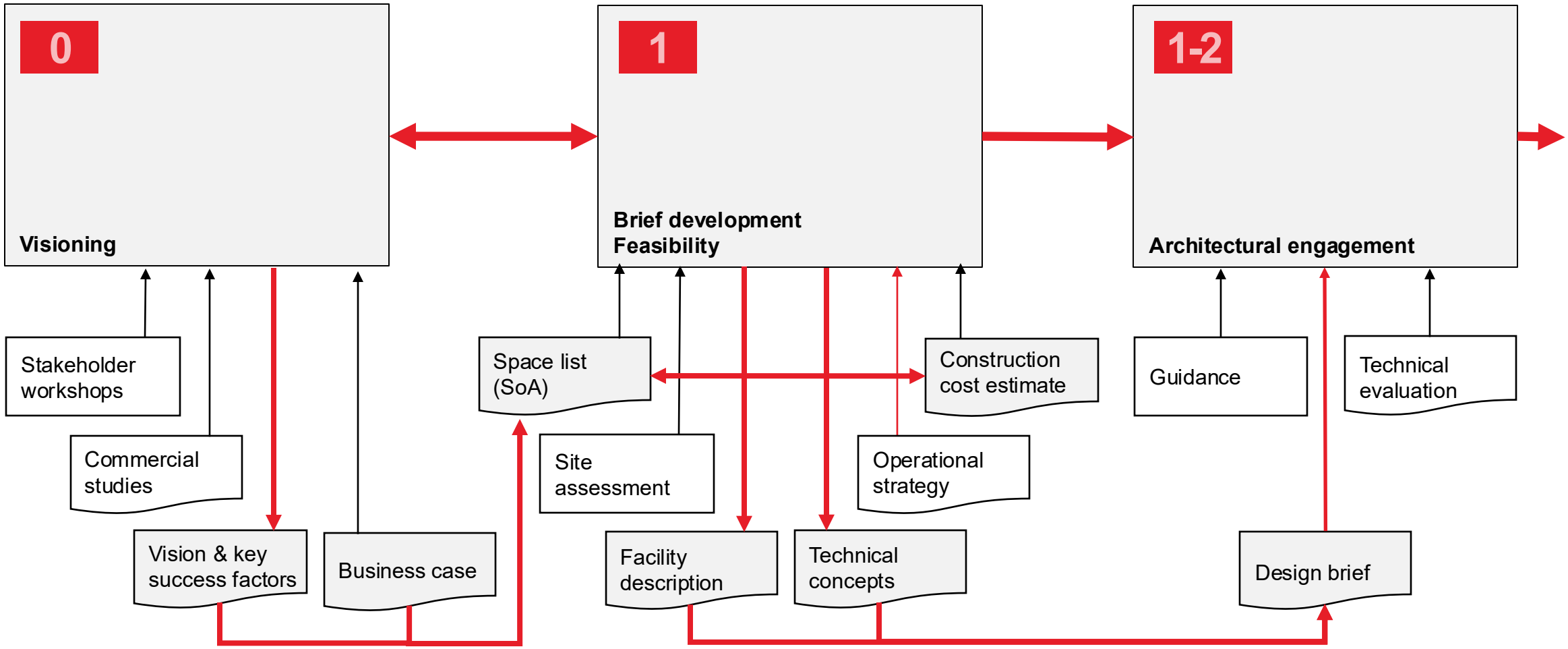
Globally, culture:

- **Contributes 0.5% to 7.3% of GDP** and **0.5% to 12.5% of employment**
- **Generates almost US$2.3 trillion annually**, equivalent to **3.1% of global GDP**
- **Creative service exports reached US$1.4 trillion in 2022**, up **29% since 2017**, while creative-goods exports reached **US$713 billion**, up **19%**

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What will we do next?

Planning and developing the concept into reality



ARUP

Commonwealth Arts and Culture : Partners

Commonwealth Creative and Performing Arts

(Incorporating The Commonwealth Resounds and Commonwealth Dance)

www.commonwealthresounds.com

Revere Arts

https://www.reverearts.com/

The Auckland Philharmonia (New Zealand)

https://aucklandphil.nz/

Solfa Music (Samoa)

https://www.facebook.com/p/SolFa-Music-Samoa-61556412339147/

About Arup

Company Profile

Arup at 80

Founded in the UK in 1946, Arup celebrates 80 years in 2026. Dedicated to sustainable development, the firm brings together 17,000 designers, advisors and technical specialists working across 140 countries. We combine imagination, technology and rigour to help our clients address complex challenges through technical excellence, effective organisation and personal service.

Arup first came to international prominence through its pioneering work on the Sydney Opera House. Projects including the Centre Pompidou in Paris, Exhibition Road at the V&A in London and the Sagrada Familia in Barcelona have further established our reputation for engineering that supports architectural innovation.

We have grown into a multidisciplinary practice contributing to many of the world's leading cultural projects. Our experience reflects a fascination with how spaces can support and inspire artists, while responding to the evolving needs of audiences and institutions.

Owner structure

Arup is an independent firm, owned in trust for the benefit of its members and their dependants. With no external shareholders or investors, we can determine our own priorities and take a long-term view of our work, our client relationships and the development of our people.

Our leaders combine specialist expertise with the ability to make decisions that support lasting quality and value. This independence allows us to choose work aligned with our values and collaborate with clients on ambitious projects.

Our ownership model also supports the sharing of knowledge and resources across the firm. We assemble teams around each project's particular challenges, connecting dedicated delivery with wider specialist expertise. For RBO, this means clear responsibility, close communication and access to the skills needed throughout the commission.

Sustainable leadership

Arup's aim is to help create a sustainable built environment, balancing the needs of people with the finite capacity and health of our planet. We incorporate environmental considerations into our services and support the development of sustainable design through research, project work and industry initiatives.

A culture of innovation

Arup invests in research, professional development and new techniques in engineering design and management. Knowledge gained through individual projects is shared across our practice, allowing teams to draw on international experience while developing responses to local challenges.

Our approach is grounded in Total Architecture: considering each decision in relation to the whole building. Bringing disciplines together encourages creative solutions and helps resolve the relationships between acoustic performance, architecture, structures and building systems.

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NEW ZEALAND

Thomas Hamill

Senior Arts Executive and Strategist,
Auckland Philharmonia

“Not just a venue, but a hub for creativity, education, collaboration, and community engagement.”

NEW ZEALAND - Response to Questions

Background

The Auckland Philharmonia, New Zealand’s largest employer of performing artists, has been without a permanent home since its rehearsal facility was condemned in 2022. A new site at 23 Union Street in Auckland’s CBD was purchased in 2025, with plans to develop a dedicated arts and cultural centre.

Key Challenges in Auckland

Auckland lacks a central space where professional arts organisations can share resources and collaborate. Existing venues like TAPAC and Mangere Arts Centre are smaller and lack central accessibility. The city’s sprawling layout creates barriers for communities in west and south Auckland. Work with refugee communities, people with disabilities, and those facing social isolation is restricted without a permanent home.

The 23 Union Street Vision

The new centre aims to provide a stable home for the Philharmonia and its archives, enable collaborative programming with other arts organisations, expand access to the arts for underserved communities including schools, families and emerging artists, and foster social connection, creativity and wellbeing through inclusive, community-focused initiatives.

Broader Need in New Zealand

Other regions such as Whangarei, Dargaville, and Hokitika also lack strong arts infrastructure. However, Auckland’s disparities — particularly in access to education and cultural participation for its multicultural population — highlight the urgency of this project.



SAMOA

Faautu Charis Talapusi

Media, Communications and Logistics, SolFa Music

"A permanent, world-class Pacific music conservatory that nurtures musicians, preserves culture, and leads the Pacific region."

SAMOA - Response to Questions

Alignment with TCR

SolFa's vision and mission aligns with the values Commonwealth Resounds has championed; this conversation is especially timely as SolFa is actively working toward securing a permanent home.

Vision for Samoa

SolFa's vision is to establish a permanent, world-class Pacific music conservatory in Samoa that nurtures musicians, preserves culture, and leads the Pacific region in music education and performance. They are developing a long-term strategic infrastructure plan for this goal.

The Space

They envision a multicultural, multi-functional physical space filled with joy and creativity, where music, arts and Pacific culture intersect. A safe, nurturing environment designed to foster and empower the community to explore different mediums of arts and music — and importantly, designed to be climate-resilient given the impact of climate change on Pacific islands.

Next Steps

SolFa will share their plan in the coming weeks as they await developments currently underway. They look forward to exploring how collaboration can advance their mission, reflect shared values, and deliver meaningful benefits to communities in Samoa and the Pacific.