



Tips

Writing a proposal to exhibit

Thinking of submitting an exhibition proposal to Whirinaki Whare Taonga (or any gallery)?
Great! Here's a step-by-step guide to help you be prepared and put your best foot forward.

Get to know the gallery

Check the timeline: Whirinaki Whare Taonga and most public galleries usually programs their exhibitions 18 months - 2 years in advance.

Visit the gallery: Seeing the space and current exhibitions in person gives you a better sense of what they're all about.

Ask yourself: Does my work suit the gallery's style, audience, and vision? Check out our website.

Prepare before you apply

Have a strong concept: Know exactly what your exhibition is about and why it matters.

Start early: Give yourself time to think, write, revise, and gather materials.

Reach out: A short, professional chat with gallery staff can help clarify your idea.

Think about collaborator: Group exhibitions or community-focused projects are sometimes a great first step.

Writing your proposal

The Concept What and Why?

Start with your idea. What is it, and help the reader *feel* why this idea matters to you.

Explain the purpose behind the work. Why now? What themes are you exploring?

Connect it to your broader art practice: How does it fit in?

Tip: Choose a strong, intentional title. It's the first thing people will see and should give a sense of the exhibition's mood, meaning, or theme. A good title reflects thoughtfulness and adds clarity or intrigue—it can spark curiosity and make your proposal more memorable.

The Physical Description What it will look like?

Describe the media, techniques used and any layout or installation considerations.

Dimensions and number of works: Indicate the number of works you intend to exhibit, along with the approximate dimensions, include the range of sizes if applicable.

Explain how it will work within Whirinaki Whare Taonga space.

Note any interactive, sensory, or technical elements.

Attach supporting visuals, sketches, works in progress, past installations, etc. Ensure they are legible and clearly labelled.

Image Tips: under 1mg if emailed; link to moving image content (e.g. YouTube, Vimeo).

Practical Details How will it happen?

Timeline: Add a simple plan from development to installation.

Mention any special equipment or display requirements i.e plinths, monitors, speakers, power access, hanging systems.

Explain any safety requirements. This may include stability of freestanding works, electrical safety, handling instructions, or any potential hazards for visitors

Include a floorplan or sketch if space is important



Galleries need artists

Supporting material

Make sure to include

Artist CV or Bio: Focus on art-related experience, education, awards, residences and publications.

Portfolio: Choose high-quality, relevant images. Show your best work first.

Online links: Website or social media with direct links to relevant work.

Optional extras: Reviews, catalogues, or other responses to your work.

Presentation and submission

Keep it simple and professional

Combine everything into one PDF, unless they ask otherwise.

Use A4 pages clear fonts, headers, and page numbers.

Do not send oversized files or multiple attachments unless instructed.

Follow any specific instructions.

Other considerations

Added value: Does the show offer educational potential, cultural or community engagement.

Could your exhibition include a talk, workshop or school visit?

Note if you're applying for funding (e.g Creative NZ) and how the exhibition fits into that plan.

If your work isn't finished yet

That's okay. Most galleries, including Whirinaki, don't expect finished work at the proposal stage. Present the concept and your process. Provide evidence that you can deliver the project (images of similar work, developmental sketches, timelines). If it's a new direction, explain why, and back it up with research or test material.

Final thoughts

Write as if the reader doesn't know your work.

Be specific to the gallery - don't copy and paste the same version to different places.

Proofread! Ask a friend or mentor to check it over.

If You're Unsuccessful, don't give up. Refine and try again.

Stay involved: Attend exhibitions, gallery openings, volunteer, and network. Visibility and engagement can open future opportunities.

For more information visit the Whirinaki Whare Taonga's website or contact their team to find out more about their exhibition program and proposal process.

Checklist

Is the concept clear and relevant to Whirinaki Whare Taonga?

Have you answered all required questions?

Are your visuals and supporting materials strong and relevant?

Is your proposal concise, proofread, and well-organised?

Is your contact information included?