

10 December 2021

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Tēnā koe Danyl

I refer to your request received on 19 October 2021, which has been considered under the Official Information Act 1982 (OIA), for:

- *any documents, notes or communications regarding the decision to provide emergency covid funding to 'Narrative Muse', including any materials referencing either Teresa Bass or Bough Johnson.*

Context about the funding awarded to Narrative Muse

Regrettably, some of the media coverage and social media content about the funding for Narrative Muse was misinformed – in part because detailed information about the purpose of the funding was not shared at the time of the funding announcement.

Narrative Muse was awarded funding through the Cultural Sector Innovation Fund, which is part of the Government's \$374 million Arts and Culture COVID Recovery Programme. The Innovation Fund supports innovative projects with potential to improve the sustainability and resilience of the cultural sector. Manatū Taonga approved funding for Narrative Muse because of the project's potential to help achieve these outcomes.

It is important to understand that the \$500,000 awarded from the Innovation Fund is not for the work of Narrative Muse to date, but to enable it to take the next steps proposed in its application.

Manatū Taonga sees potential in Narrative Muse's innovative platform to increase commercial opportunities for local content creators across several different sectors, including the literary and screen sectors. It also has potential for positive impacts for Aotearoa audiences, by connecting them with content in which they see themselves and their stories represented.

Today, Narrative Muse is an online recommendation platform that helps connect audiences with books, movies and TV content by or about intersectional women and gender-diverse people. Its focus on this audience and the personalised way in which it delivers recommendations is unique to Narrative Muse and sets it apart from existing content recommendation platforms.

The next phase of Narrative Muse's platform will use artificial intelligence to process information and generate insights about the qualities of books, movies, and TV shows that connect with these historically under-represented audiences, who want content that reflects them. Narrative Muse will focus on Māori, Pacific, Asian and rainbow female and gender-diverse audiences.

These content data insights combined with Narrative Muse’s audience insights create the potential to give publishers and screen producers evidence to support the commissioning of new work for new diverse audiences. We are not aware of any other insights provider that combines content and audience insights for this depth of understanding. Due to Narrative Muse’s local and global understanding of audiences, this could create an additional avenue for New Zealand content to reach new local and global markets.

Information being released

The written application made by Narrative Muse consisted of a business case, a lean canvas, and a slide deck, which are provided to you as documents 1-3. Narrative Muse also provided detailed budget information, all of which is being withheld under section 9(2)(b)(ii) of the OIA - to protect information where the making available of the information would be likely unreasonably to prejudice the commercial position of the person who supplied or who is the subject of the information.

The funding agreement between Narrative Muse and Manatū Taonga will also be withheld under section 9(2)(b)(ii). The funding agreement template is provided as document 6, and the bullet points below are a summary of the agreement.

Through the Cultural Sector Innovation funding, Narrative Muse will:

- grow New Zealand audiences, with a focus on Māori, Pacific, Asian and Rainbow women and gender diverse audiences; and growing global audiences.
- add more Aotearoa-based content to its platform with a focus on Māori, Pacific, Asian and Rainbow community content
- direct Aotearoa audiences to local content distributors, sellers and platforms
- strengthen relationships with key New Zealand content producer stakeholders
- help form collaborations between New Zealand publishing and screen sectors
- accelerate the development of the platform for audiences to discover and consume content
- commercialise combined audience and content insights.

Please find enclosed the following documents:

Item	Date	Document Description	Decision
1	May 2021	Application documents: Narrative Muse Lean Canvas	Some information withheld under 9(2)(a), 9(2)(b)(ii).
2	May 2021	Application Documents: Narrative Muse Slide deck	Some information withheld under 9(2)(a), 9(2)(b)(ii).

3	7 May 2021	Application Documents: Narrative Muse Business Case	Some information withheld under 9(2)(a), 9(2)(b)(ii).
4	1 July 2021	Papers: Sector Support Governance Committee Paper: <i>Te Urungi: Innovating Aotearoa – Te Whanganui-a-Tara and online project funding recommendations for approval</i>	Some information withheld under 9(2)(ba)(i). Out of scope information not provided.
5	14 July 2021	Papers: Ministerial Paper: <i>AM2021/401 Aide memoire: Cultural Sector Regeneration Fund, Te Urungi: Innovating Aotearoa – Approved project funding from Porirua and online events</i>	Some information withheld under 9(2)(a).
6	N/A	Papers: Template: <i>Cultural Sector Regeneration Fund Te Tahua Āki Auahatanga Innovation Fund Funding Agreement</i>	Released in full.
7		Excerpt: <i>Innovation Porirua and Online notifications</i> (excel spreadsheet)	Some information withheld under 9(2)(a), 9(2)(b)(ii), 9(2)(g)(i). Out of scope information not provided.
8	Various	Excerpts of other spreadsheets mentioning Narrative Muse, Brough Johnson or Teresa Bass	Some information withheld under 9(2)(a), 9(2)(b)(ii), 9(2)(g)(i). Out of scope information not provided.
9	Various	Emails in scope	Some information withheld under 9(2)(a), 9(2)(b)(ii), 9(2)(g)(i). Out of scope information not provided.

I have decided to release the relevant parts of the documents listed above, subject to information being withheld under one or more of the following sections of the OIA, as applicable:

- section 9(2)(a) – to protect the privacy of natural persons
- section 9(2)(b)(ii) – to protect information where the making available of the information would be likely unreasonably to prejudice the commercial position of the person who supplied the information, or who is the subject of the information
- section 9(2)(ba)(i) – to protect information which is subject to an obligation of confidence or which any person has been or could be compelled to provide under the authority of any enactment, where the making available of the information would be likely to prejudice the supply of similar information, or information from the same source, and it is in the public interest that such information should continue to be supplied
- section 9(2)(g)(i) – to maintain the effective conduct of public affairs through the free and frank expression of opinions by or between or to Ministers of the Crown or members of an organisation or officers and employees of any public service agency or organisation in the course of their duty.

In making this decision, I have considered the public interest considerations in section 9(1) of the OIA. I do not consider these considerations outweigh the need to withhold the information.

You have the right to seek an investigation and review by the Ombudsman of this response to your request under the OIA. Information about how to make a complaint is available at www.ombudsman.parliament.nz or freephone 0800 802 602.

Nāku noa, nā



Joe Fowler
Deputy Chief Executive
Te Aka Tūhono Investment and Outcomes