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**Aotearoa's Digital Future
November 2021**

Towards a digital strategy for Aotearoa

Imagine a future where everyone in Aotearoa New Zealand can make the most of the opportunities that digital technology provides them to be successful.

That's the future we are passionate about!

We are a group of leaders with executive responsibility for digital technology in our organisations, who care about our nation and the positive impact that technology can play in our shared future.

This submission is based on our 2020 Manifesto, published prior to the election. Following focused discussions, it also includes feedback from our leaders. Our submission addresses our desire to support collaborative leadership to secure a bright digital future for all.

In response to the discussion document, we highlight areas which we believe require future focus. We discuss the need to be visionary in developing the future strategy with actionable advice. We also explore critical leadership in the areas of innovation, sustainability and trust.

It's within this context we are pleased to provide this feedback on the *Towards a Digital Strategy for Aotearoa* Discussion Document released by the New Zealand Government on 6 October 2021.

Craig Young
Executive Director



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We need to be visionary

Government can demonstrate leadership by building a safe and trusted digital technology platform that is resilient and allows for flexibility to deal with disruption.

This statement was our challenge to the incoming Government as part of the 2020 Manifesto developed by Tech Leaders Executive. To be assured of a bright digital future for all, any digital strategy for the nation must be holistic. However, this also requires an established framework and significant leadership role by Government.

We know that digital growth in our economy is not just about the tech sector but the “uptake and smart use of information and communications technologies (ICT) across the economy” (MBIE Digital Economy Team). This recognises that we will be the most successful when we include everyone in the ecosystem.

Our overriding desire is to provide collaborative leadership, sharing our knowledge and experience and providing actionable advice. This includes advocating to Government and Technology Industry leaders on the needs and aspirations of all New Zealanders, including businesses and individuals.

We believe that now is the time to build on the momentum created by our response to the COVID-19 pandemic. In particular, through the enforced work and lifestyle changes, and the ensuing value of our digital infrastructure. This includes the investment in core enabling technology, for example the fibre to the premise network and investment by businesses in implementing cloud based systems.

We like many others, became acutely aware of the challenges faced. These were highlighted in the joint report we undertook with the Technology Users Association of New Zealand (TUANZ) in early 2021, *Aotearoa’s digital priorities in 2021*.



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...the pace and urgency with which we move to support all New Zealanders' need for fast data, flexibility and digital services is clear... (t)here is no precedent that had the level of technology that is available to us today and from recent adversity comes opportunity to build an even stronger and more enduring digital nation.

Sonya Crosby
Aotearoa's Digital Priorities in 2021 p2

To achieve this we must be committed to a vision and focused on outcomes. We consider the vision included in the draft discussion document as a statement to begin the conversation. However, we believe it does not provide a practical pathway, nor a specific and clear enough target to aim for. We have a high level goal, without a way of knowing when we've got there.

For this reason, we need a 'new digital deal'.



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A digital deal

A commitment to working together towards a common goal of an inclusive and secure bright digital future for all.

In the end, no digital strategy will be successful if only one part of the ecosystem is charged with delivering it.

In practice, this means sharing responsibility and obligations. We believe that New Zealand businesses are willing to commit to playing their part. However, we need to further mobilise the team of five million to sign onto a new digital deal, with everyone playing their part. The Government can play its part by building a safe and trusted digital technology platform to deliver the benefits we know can accrue from increased digitalisation.



It's a simple equation – if the Government, plus our people and businesses can commit, we will see increased sustainability efforts, economic growth and improvements in social cohesion through improved digital equity and inclusion.

To fully realise the power of a digital dividend requires joint commitment.



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The Tech Leaders Executive doesn't speak for all businesses, however we do represent a number of large corporate users of technology in various sectors of the economy. We recognise that if the Government further commits to improving the digital infrastructure of the nation, businesses will also commit to building on that capability.

Examples of specific commitments that may be developed include:

1. Ensuring the immigration settings allow for relevant skills when needed, while businesses commit to upskilling their existing teams to reduce the need for future immigration.
2. Committing to further improvements in regional broadband connectivity (to ensure rural and regional centres have equivalent services to major urban centres), which means businesses can commit to employing more remote workers based in those regions.
3. The development of a holistic framework for digital identity, will encourage businesses to work withing the framework, which will encourage citizens to benefit from this new approach.

Now is the right time to work together and develop a new digital deal. A clear vision and specific commitments for all of us will help ensure Aotearoa New Zealand can make the most of the opportunities that digital technology provides.

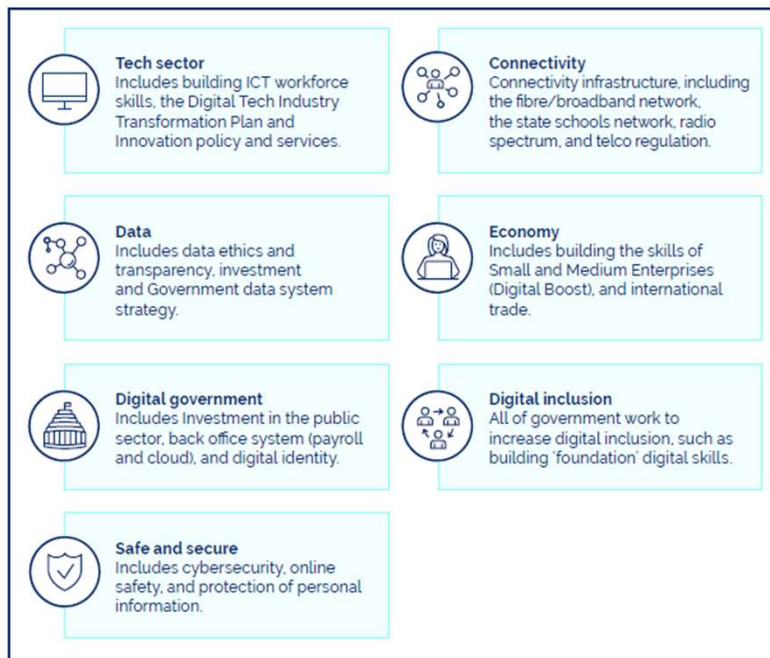


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What's missing?

What is good for Aotearoa New Zealand, is good for business! We recognise all businesses need to be engaged and involved.

We note in the discussion document the whole of business (economy) must be involved. However, there is no specific action to support the wider business environment or obligation placed on the wider economy. The diagram below focuses on the tech sector, small and medium enterprises (SMEs) and the Digital Technologies Industry Transformation Plan (Digital Tech ITP), but not the wider business environment.



The Digital Tech ITP is focused mainly on the IT sector and the businesses focused on developing and selling digital services versus those that use it in their businesses and daily lives. We would like to see recognition of the importance of the wider business community – both in terms of how Government will support their digital transformation, but also how larger businesses will play their part in securing our digital future.

Innovation brings growth

Mahi Ake : Growth

All our businesses need to innovate and adopt technology to grow our economy

Innovation needs to be right sized for Aotearoa New Zealand

The concept of innovation is not just about the internationalisation and increase in export markets, but also about what can be done onshore. This requires right sizing for the NZ business sector. This also applies to the multitude of schemes which could be brought together in a cross-government approach.

Broader understanding on innovation

Many in business, particularly larger businesses, are aware of the importance of innovation and growth. Any strategy needs to include the targeting of groups such as parents and teachers who influence the next generation of leaders and skilled developers. We need to increase our investment in upskilling teachers to deliver new and updated curricula and we need to do things differently and encourage programmes such as the virtual learning network (VLN) schools.

Targeted Immigration

We need to ensure that we have access to the best talent. This can be achieved through expediting entry for skilled migrants especially those with in-demand technology skills needed immediately. However, immigration should also be targeted at those that can contribute to building the skills of New Zealanders – such as experienced teachers and tertiary researchers.

Digital identity needs to be finalised

Work towards a unique digital identity framework that improves digital integrity and improves productivity. This unique identity should reflect te ao Māori as part of our commitment to Te Tiriti o Waitangi.

Government has a big responsibility on upskilling their own

More than 80,000 digital workers are employed in central Government, and with this the Government also has the responsibility to invest in upskilling these individuals in preparation for our digital future.



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Sustainability is key to our future

Mahi Tahi : Inclusion

We all need to be committed to everyone benefiting from a sustainable future built on a digital economy

Meeting our environmental challenges

To meet our international commitments and contribute towards a sustainable future, we need to develop an economy that is less reliant on industries that contribute to global warming. This includes the tech sector, but also includes other innovative businesses using digital technology to reshape the New Zealand economy.

Helping develop a circular economy

We can develop an economy using technology to develop a model of production and consumption, which involves sharing, leasing, reusing, repairing, refurbishing and recycling existing materials and products for as long as possible.

Improving connectivity

To make the most of our digital future, we need to continue investing in our connectivity (for example, our broadband networks). This includes maintaining a world leading standard for speed and data throughput. This also requires deeper investigation to connect those who are not able to be served at this point.

Encouraging local tech talent development

We should be supporting, encouraging and providing access for regional New Zealanders, Māori, Pasifika and women to develop skills in digital and technology.

Improving procurement processes

Ideally, Government procurement processes should be flexible and efficient to improve access for all New Zealand companies.



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Trust and inclusion

Mahi Tika : Trust

To ensure all are involved, we need to build trust in this connected world

To build trust, we need to be open and transparent. Trust leads to inclusion.

As a nation, we need to implement processes and policies based on openness around the use of data. Open banking is one example that may lead to increased efficiency and productivity. The Government should endorse, adopt and improve information security and open standards to level the playing field for technology.

Digital identity is critical

We recommend working towards a unique digital identity framework, one that improves digital integrity and inclusivity. This unique identity should reflect te ao Māori and our commitment to Te Tiriti o Waitangi.

Trusted data

National cybersecurity needs to be prioritised. This includes recognising the importance of collaboration between the Government and the business sector in developing policies for safety, privacy and digital identity.

Redefining the workplace

To proactively include everyone in our digital future, we need to redefine the workplace to better support inclusion. This includes the accelerated improvement and adoption of working practices to better support the varied needs of this workforce.

Connect everyone who wishes to be connected

Not only do we need to continue to investing in our communications networks, we need to continue to connect everyone who wishes to be connected. This may involve the provision of affordable universal high speed internet access throughout Aotearoa New Zealand.



Who are the Tech Leaders Executive?

Launched in 2017 by NZTech, the Tech Leaders Executive is a not-for-profit membership organisation and is part of the New Zealand Tech Alliance.

Our key purpose is to actively contribute to the prosperity of New Zealand through influencing positive economic and social change.

We provide an independent platform for leaders across a diverse range of agencies, companies and organisations.

Using our collective knowledge and experience, we propose further collaborative work on relevant issues and opportunities, to help develop a cohesive plan of action.

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**Tech Leaders Executive is part of
the Tech Alliance**

