

Bay of Plenty Regional Council

Improving Ratepayer Engagement
With Key Projects



Bay of Plenty Regional Council

Transparent Budget Discussions
In A Digital Age



Challenge:
Improving ratepayer
engagement.

Bay Of Plenty Regional Council was already an OrbViz client, having used the Bubbles platform to share income-expenditure with ratepayers. Now, they had a new rates expenditure challenge that required dynamic end-user feedback. We spoke with Finance Support Team Lead, Mereana Toroa, about how OrbViz helped BOPRC get to the heart of their data by starting an interactive conversation with their community.

Mereana:

“Our problem was a rates-related project. Consulting with the public on seven key questions around how best to spend their rates money,”

Solution:
Rates calculator to
the rescue

The OrbViz team created the rates calculator prototype for review within a fortnight of our initial scoping session. Mereana: “We wanted to show the options visually. To give people choices they could vote for and show how each of those choices would impact upon their rates bill.” Rates Calculator is an interactive platform that securely pulls rating data from a council’s database. The user types in their address - the platform accesses their data and then prompts them to answer questions about their property and/or area.

Implementation:
Creating an innovative,
dynamic, positive
feedback loop

Mereana: “No-one responds to numbers on a page. This new platform received a lot of positive feedback from councillors, ratepayers, and from territorial authorities.” Before the rates calculator, this feedback process was laborious; the pertinent information wasn’t immediately available, so stakeholder engagement was low. With Rates Calculator the ratepayers could choose the options related to them and see the results of their choices directly, and the system gathered and shared the feedback in real-time.

Outcomes:
Real-time feedback and
positive feedback

Mereana: “The user experience feedback we received was primarily about how intuitive the platform is. People could see how to use it just by looking at it.” Plus, the Bay Of Plenty regional council’s feedback via Rates Calculator meant they could make better expenditure decisions because they’d gathered informed input from their constituents. Mereana: “The OrbViz platform is a creative way to represent data - an innovative way - and, as a forward-thinking organisation, we are always looking for ways to improve our operations and increase ratepayer engagement.”