

Christchurch City Council



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Challenge:

Leverage the asset you already have - data

Local governments throughout New Zealand and further afield struggle to engage their communities with democratic processes and important information, such as annual and long-term plans. People are time poor, and need to be able to find what is relevant to them at lightning speed.

Christchurch City Council converted its annual plan into a concise, fluid conversation with the public using OrbViz Bubbles. We spoke with Smart Christchurch manager Michael Healey.

Michael: "Everything the council does is for the community, and everything the council does is paid for by the community. So arguably the most important thing we need to do is to make the data about how we spend money and the projects that we do - what we're focussing on - make sense to our community."

That's no small challenge when you have a 200-page document covering hundreds of millions – if not billions – of spend.

Solution:

Turning line items into bubbles

These reports traditionally present data in thousands of complex line items.

"That's not a very accessible way for a community to engage with it," Michael said. "A lot of people will struggle with that."

"The bubbles, I find, gives us a level of accessibility and transparency that we haven't achieved to date. Anyone from a three-year-old to and 83-year-old, can tap on a bubble and see what the bubble relates to. Then you can deep-dive into a project of particular interest."

This enables people to find the information they are interested in quickly, and to easily understand it. It's possible to dive from a macro view to a micro view at the click of a mouse.

"To me, it's a personalised and accessible way to interact with very complex data, without having to understand the complexity behind it."

Outcomes:

More eyes on data
= more submissions

Christchurch City Council, in its 2023/24 annual plan consultation period, experience a 60% increase in the number of submissions it received.

"That's a gamechanger," Michael said. "I think we like to talk about active citizenship, where it's a two-way conversation, it's not just one way. And this is one of the ways that we think we're making it more of an active relationship and a two-way dialog, and that's really important."