

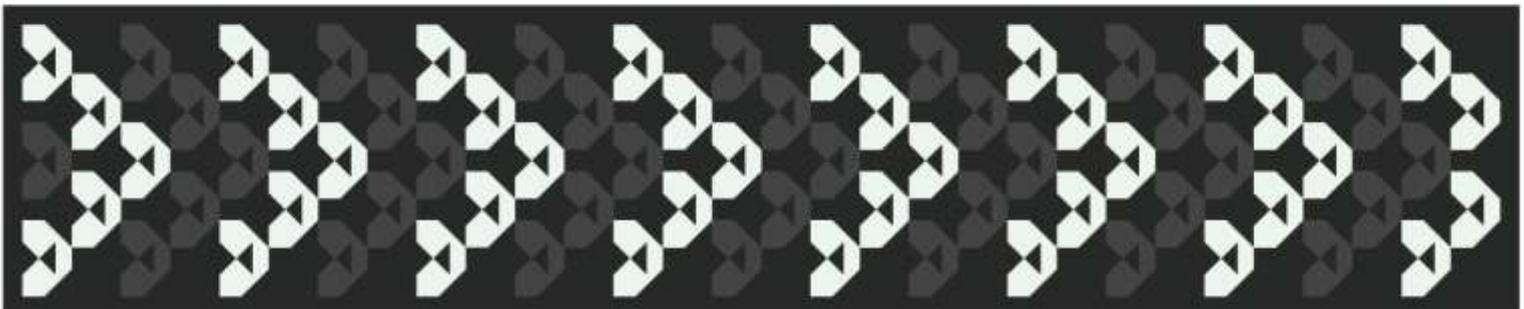


**Te Arotake i te Anamata  
mō Ngā Kaunihera**  
Review into the Future for  
Local Government

November 2021

# **Monthly report on website survey**

**8 October – 10 November 2021**



01 October 2021

## Background

This report provides an overview of responses to a survey available on the website of the Review into the Future for Local Government ([futureforlocalgovernment.govt.nz](https://futureforlocalgovernment.govt.nz)). The responses were gathered between 8 October and 10 November 2021.

The launch of the survey followed the release of the Review's interim report, *Ārewa ake te Kaupapa*, in September 2021, and is part of a wider engagement programme. Survey questions are based on five priority questions identified in the interim report.

Survey reports will be published monthly for the duration of the survey.

## Respondent analysis

There were 44 responses across a range of stakeholder and industry groups. Most respondents were from local government.

The table below outlines the stakeholder groups respondents identified with:

Stakeholder group	Number of responses
Local government	24
Business or organisation	6
Political group or expert	4
General public	8
Community group	2
<b>Total</b>	<b>44</b>

Opinions are individuals' own and not necessarily representative of the bodies they represent.

## Themes

The following themes arose across survey responses:

- Increased education and training is needed for councils (staff and councillors) and the public on government, the economy, history and culture.
- The Review should take the opportunity to explore new governance models, for example, by having kaumātua and/or experts sit alongside councillors.
- The principle of subsidiarity: that many social and political issues should be dealt with at the most immediate level.
- An authentic Te Tiriti partnership could include a formal constitutional role, Te Ao Māori perspectives and a definition of partnership and co-governance.
- More diverse funding models are needed to ensure transparency and develop a wellbeing narrative.

- Representation of communities within local governance is key. Communities need to have a voice and see themselves reflected in local government.
- A redesigned system should have a wellbeing focus, be flexible, and create liveable cities. It should be developed with the community, for the community.

## Summary of responses

### **Question 1: Do you have one “big idea” for the future for local government that will improve the wellbeing and prosperity of local communities and reflect Te Tiriti o Waitangi?**

- Education: improve the understanding of what governance is, the role of local government and the economy.
- Organisational maturity: a local government respondent and a business respondent supported the maturing of local government to move away from reactive decision-making and the politicising of decision-making. There could be more collaboration and sharing of success stories and techniques between councils.
- Financial processes: overhaul, redesign and reimagine the economy (and revenue streams) to provide for wellbeing outcomes. Improve the transparency and accountability of financial processes.
- Te Tiriti o Waitangi: A local government respondent advocated to ensure there is a formal constitutional role for local governance.
- Representation: this is an opportunity to have citizen and community panels from which local government can get guidance on key issues. Local government and general public respondents recommended engagement with and valuing diverse communities. This could include representative governance based on age.
- Localisation: there were varying suggestions from local government, general public and expert respondents about how to split up local, regional and central government roles and functions, for example central government making the overarching policy, regions developing rules and indicators and local and Māori boards doing the ground work and providing input into planning and decision-making. Most noted the need for cost-effectiveness, reducing repetitive functions and demands from central to local government, and clearly defining services at each level.
- A local government respondent advocated for designing local government based on supporting/creating “15-minute communities”, that is, key services within a 15-minute walk, bus and bike.
- Governance: most respondents (including general public respondents) suggested local government should be more involved in community wellbeing. Wellbeing should take Te Ao Māori into account.

### **Question 2: How should the system of local governance be reshaped so it can adapt to future challenges and enable communities to thrive?**

- Be agile, be clear about what the community interests are, and flexibly legislate to provide desired services.
- Future challenges will be at the local level. The challenges raised by local government respondents were housing, climate change, transport and population growth.
- A local government respondent suggested incorporating Te Ao Māori. Ensure there is resourcing for iwi and local government to build capability and capacity for authentic relationships.

- **Voices of communities:** consult with communities to ensure they have a say. A respondent from the disability community said the system should be flipped to have the community on top, ensuring that activities are consistent with what the community wants. Online voting and finding innovative ways to encourage youth and others to participate (local government respondent).
- **Structure and boundaries:** many respondents, both expert and local government, raised the idea of amalgamating councils. This can strengthen local identity and purpose.
- **The value of partnerships:** with iwi, hapū and whānau, local businesses, service agencies, rural and urban communities, local schools, health providers, police and other local agencies.
- **Transparency:** a general public respondent wished for local government to provide the public with more information and transparency.
- **Governance:** there was a suggestion by a local government respondent to have experts appointed alongside elected members to strengthen decision-making. A town planner suggested there should be representation of the community, for example, representation of Asian communities in decision-making.
- A local government respondent was keen to see a younger, more innovative and collaborative workforce.

### **Question 3: What functions and roles should local government hold in the future?**

- Local government respondents suggested taking a wellbeing role to create liveable cities at a local place-making level. This could be supporting local services such as housing, social welfare, free ambulance, homeless shelters, crime prevention initiatives, economic stimulus initiatives, conservation outcomes and social housing. A number of local government respondents stressed the importance of infrastructure.
- A regional council respondent said to incorporate Te Ao Māori into sustainable resource management.
- Hold the relationships with the local communities, people to people, including the responsibility to make sure history and culture are represented in conversations.
- There were conflicting thoughts from respondents on how much to devolve to local government, with some advocating to devolve as much as possible. Others discussed centralising bodies, integrating services and managing local infrastructure. A general public respondent stated that functions and roles should largely remain the same, but that competency needed to increase significantly.
- There was a desire from local government respondents to understand how other reviews will fit in and take shape, including Three Waters and Resource Management reforms.
- A local government respondent suggested aligning and embedding ongoing operations with the delivery of aspirational goals, for example Wellington City Council's Te Atakura First to Zero, Māori and Pasifika success, and accessibility/universal design.
- Business respondents stated there should be transparency about community spending and accountability of those in charge of council funds.
- There were various ideas related to governance models. Some advocated for traditional roles: local councils looking after community services and local resources, regional councils maintaining the natural environment (air, land and water) as well as regional planning and infrastructure.

### **Question 4: How could local governance embody an authentic partnership under Te Tiriti o Waitangi to build the conditions for prosperity and wellbeing?**

- Local government respondents wish to increase education about history and culture in Aotearoa to build capability and capacity for all parties, for example by upskilling staff in te reo Māori and Te Ao Māori.

- Change processes and legislation to incorporate Te Ao Māori. Examples included enacting a formal constitutional role and creating a requirement for Te Tiriti impact analysis for decision-making (regional council respondent).
- A local government respondent suggested working together to develop and standardise processes and consultation for true engagement in partnership. A key element was valuing and creating a collaborative process (local government respondent).
- Address historic grievances and take guidance from iwi was a suggestion from a local government respondent. This was supported by another local government respondent, who said Māori should decide this question and government should resource them to do so.
- Representation in local government was a theme from local government and business respondents, through Māori appointments in decision-making bodies, kaumātua sitting with mayors on all councils, or aligning Māori wards to the Māori Electoral Roll (local government respondent).
- Develop models that are made for Māori. An example of this is the Tupu Youth Library in South Auckland, which provides services to Māori youth (local government respondent).

**Question 5: What needs to change so local government and its leaders can best reflect and respond to the communities they serve?**

- Improving education on history, civics, culture, society, politics, economics and the environment, was a theme picked up by many local government and business respondents. An idea raised was to upskill counsellors through a compulsory Local Government 101 training course (business respondent).
- Governance boards should be smaller, reflective of communities and vetted, and their remuneration should be reviewed and roles clarified. One idea was to have a compulsory seat at the council table to fulfil the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (disability community respondent). A local government respondent suggested flexibility for council meetings, for example a mix of weekdays and weekends may entice people with jobs or other commitments.
- Local government respondents thought there should be scrutiny and transparency of financial practices to create genuine and accountable bodies.
- Respondents from local government and the general public discussed a legislative review including the guidance, mandates and priorities set by legislation. A legislative framework should mandate the aspirations of the people.
- There is an opportunity to rebuild trust and confidence by improving understanding, contributing to and inspiring the community (local government respondents). There was a suggestion from an infrastructure respondent to ensure that local councillors are visible and actively engage with the community.
- An expert with experience in government, politics and foreign affairs suggested non-elected specialists and non-geographic wards.
- A local government respondent noted the need to retain and value existing local government staff.

**Question 6: What changes are required to the way local governance is funded in order to ensure viability and sustainability, fairness and equity, and maximum wellbeing?**

- There was widespread support for a comprehensive review of funding for local government, including a focus on identifying new funding sources.
- The majority of respondents acknowledged a need for more funding and more diverse funding streams.
- Various ideas related to taxation were raised including a bed tax, fuel tax, that GST should go to councils not central government (an infrastructure respondent), and a Pigouvian tax,

that is, that individuals and businesses should be taxed for adverse side effects from businesses such as on nitrogen fertiliser (local government respondent).

- A theme from local government respondents was that funding should be reprioritised or shared between central and local government, especially on overlapping goals. This could also take the form of partnering with central government, for example for town planning.
- Develop a narrative for how local government is funded, one that includes people's wellbeing and environmental wellbeing in the story (local government respondent).
- A business respondent suggested introducing user pays schemes, for example, volumetric charging for water and wastewater, and fuel taxes/road user charges for roads.
- Remove rates (or reconsider the current separation between urban and rural ratepayers) and stop funding large infrastructure projects. A local government respondent suggested removing the ability for councils or elected members to set rates.
- Separate funding in terms of services, linking to the actual economic activity (an infrastructure respondent) and ensuring transparency (business respondent).



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