

Horizons Regional Council 2025 Elections – Overarching Communications Strategy

Election Overview

Local government elections voting is open from 9 September to 11 October 2025, with voters in the Horizons Region electing 14 councillors across eight constituencies for positions on Horizons Regional Council.

Horizons is also required to hold a referendum alongside the 2025 council elections on the future of its Māori constituencies. Horizons has had two Māori constituencies (Raki Māori and Tonga Māori) since the 2022 elections. This referendum will determine whether these constituencies continue beyond the 2025-2028 term.

The communications activities will be delivered in line with the three different stages of the election year: **Enrol** to vote, **Stand** for council, **Vote** for your councillors.

Strategic Objectives

- **Increase voter turnout** across the region, particularly among young people/those new to voting.
- **Boost candidate numbers** standing for council positions.
- **Raise awareness** of Horizons' role and distinction from city/district councils.
- **Educate communities** about the importance of regional councils.
- **Counter misinformation** regarding the Māori constituencies referendum to enable factually informed decision-making.

Phase 1: Enrol (1 April - 10 July 2025)

Focus: Getting people registered to vote

Priority Audiences:

- Youth
- Māori (general vs Māori roll options).
- Migrants eligible to vote

Key Activities:

- Media release
- Website updates with enrolment information
- Collaborative poster campaign with other councils
- Social media outreach

Phase 2: Stand (4 July - 1 August 2025)

Focus: Encouraging candidates

Priority Audiences:

- Young people interested in caring for the environment.
- Māori.
- First-time candidates.
- Community representatives.

Key Activities:

- Multi-platform advertising (digital, radio, print).
- Enhanced website resources.
- Promotional materials highlighting Horizons' unique role.
- Social media strategy (including potential new channel launch).

Phase 3: Vote (9 September - 11 October 2025)

Focus: Driving voter participation.

Priority Audiences:

- All enrolled voters, with emphasis on youth and Māori.
- People needing voting information and assistance.

Key Activities:

- Candidate video profiles on website.
- Comprehensive Māori constituencies referendum explainer information providing factual information about how the constituencies work and the referendum process..
- Voting location map (including location of orange voting bins).
- Final push media & advertising campaign.
- Social media engagement drive.

Strategic Partnerships

- **City/District Councils:** Collaborative messaging and shared resources.
- **Electoral Commission:** Coordination to avoid duplication and ensure compliance.

- **Media:** Engagement with media outlets in the region, including Māori media, to explain roll options, attract candidates and providing accurate referendum information.
- **Education institutions:** Reaching young and new residents.

Risk Management

- **Misinformation monitoring:** Particularly around the Māori constituencies referendum to ensure voters have access to accurate, factual information.
- **Electoral law compliance:** Careful candidate interaction protocols during the voting period.
- **Message coordination:** Ensuring consistency across multiple councils while respecting regional variation.
- **Media landscape changes:** Adapting to reduced local journalism capacity.

Success Measures

- Voter turnout increase compared to 2022.
- Number of candidates standing for election.
- Social media engagement metrics.
- Media coverage reach and frequency.

Innovation Opportunities

- Enhanced digital tools and platforms.
- Potential new social media channels for new audiences (e.g. TikTok).
- Collaborative regional approach with shared resources.