



Increasing voter participation

**Qualitative debrief to
Auckland Council**

28 August 2018



Agenda

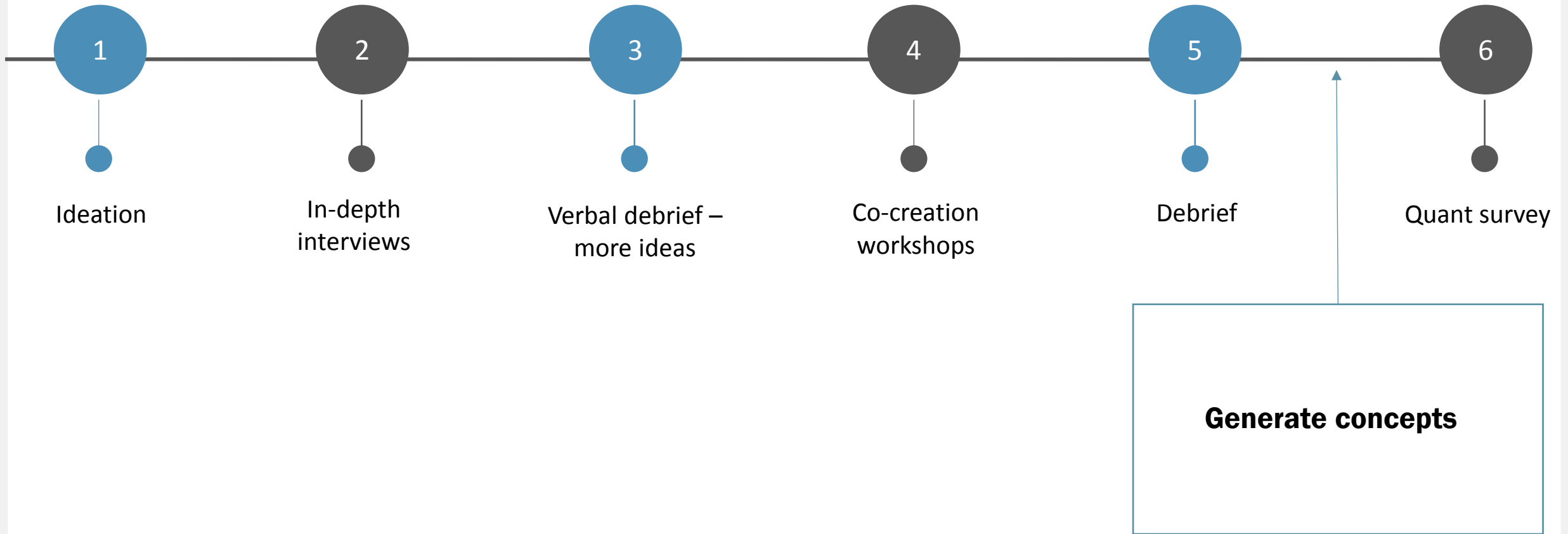
- 1 Introduction
- 2 Barriers to voting – general and specific
- 3 Ideas to overcome these
- 4 Experiences of unsuccessful candidates



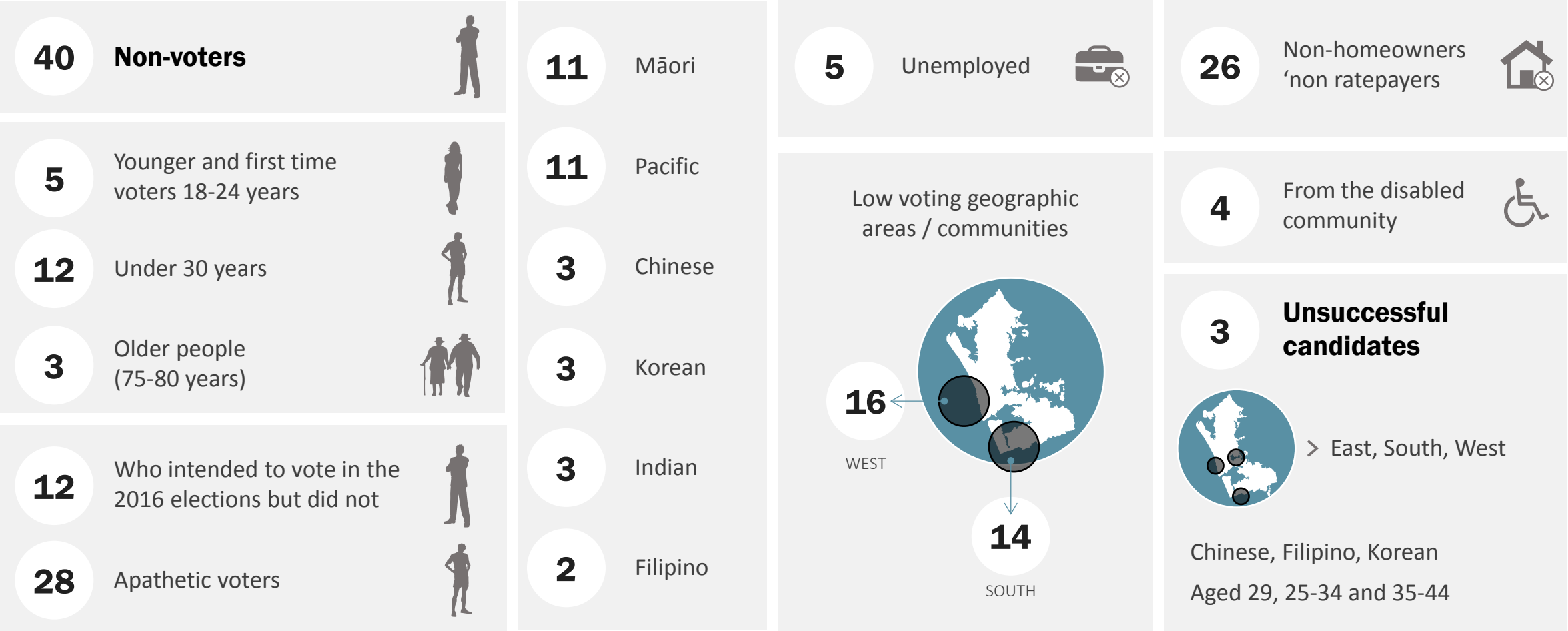


1 Introduction





We have spoken with a broad range of 43 people





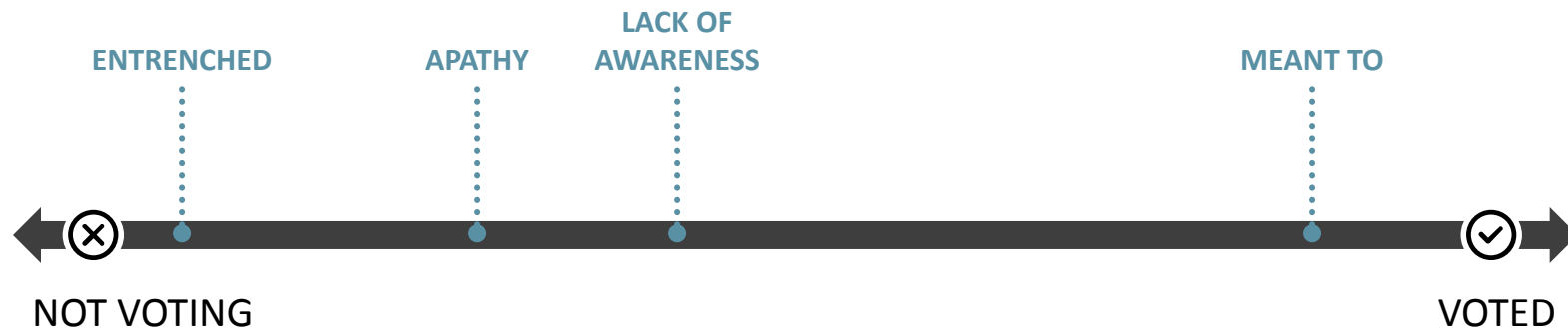
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Barriers to voting - general



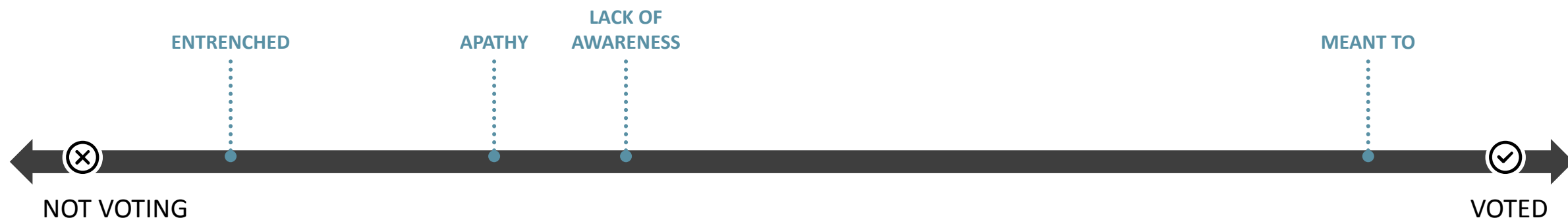
There's a continuum of non-voting attitudes & behaviour

- Note: people across the spectrum can be voters in the general elections, and some are quite politically engaged – just not with the council elections



“In Korea there is an underlying impression that if you don’t vote you are not as intelligent / it’s embarrassing not to vote. I don’t think people feel this way in NZ.”





ENTRENCHED

"Seems pointless, seems a waste of my time"

"I know that it's wrong to think this way but what's the point – you know they gonna get in anyway, and you've wasted your time."

APATHY

"I'm not into politics, don't talk about it. If I voted it'd be blind voting because I don't know enough about any of the candidates or their policies."

"I don't keep up with the media. It's for more vocal people, or those with strong opinions."

"I've never heard 'cool' and 'voting' in the same sentence."

LACK OF AWARENESS

"I assumed it was done online."

"I didn't even know there was a difference [between local and central government]."

"So local would be like, John Key in Kumeu?"

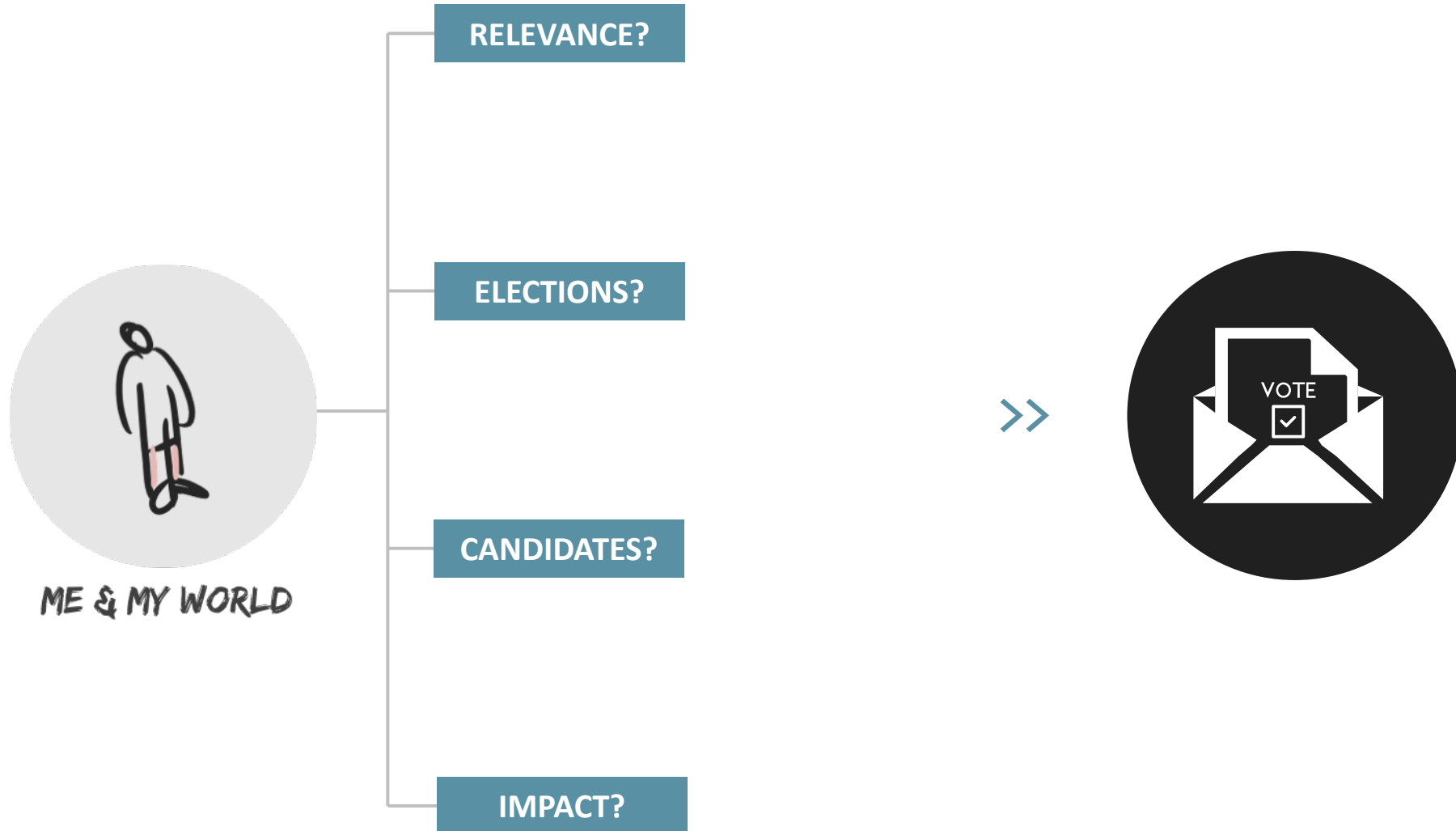
"There's a Mayor?"

MEANT TO

"I think I got the orange envelope, just didn't get around to doing it."

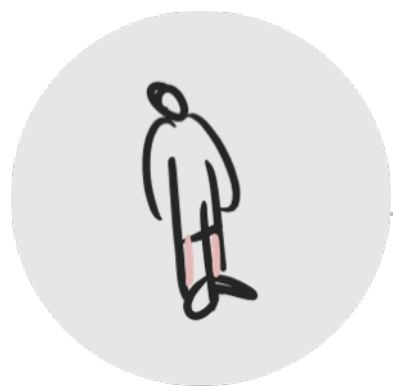


The core barriers to voting add up to lack of motivation





Relevance: Lack of understanding and connection to my life



ME & MY WORLD

RELEVANCE?

- “What does council do?”
- What are they responsible for?
- How are they relevant to me?
 - The essentials can be expected or ‘invisible’ (rubbish, street lights)
 - Negative associations tend to be at the forefront – rates, parking fines
 - Positives are not top of mind – events, libraries, playgrounds, parks...
 - Transport and housing can overshadow everything – have a greater impact on my life
 - Council seems a somewhat faceless institution – lacks a personal connection

ELECTIONS?

CANDIDATES?

IMPACT?



“I’ve never seen them as part of my day to day life.”

“It principally comes down to me being lazy and not seeing the reason to be involved.”





Elections: Confusing and lack presence



ME & MY WORLD

RELEVANCE?

- “There’s a Mayor?”
- Confusion and lack of knowledge:
 - There is much confusion between local and central government elections
 - And between what central vs local government is responsible for
 - Younger people in particular may not even know we have a Mayor
 - Wards & Local Boards – not easy to grasp
 - Added complexity with DHBs and Licensing Trusts – it’s overwhelming

ELECTIONS?

CANDIDATES?

- “What elections?”
 - Minimal recall of the election campaign
 - Lacks the visibility and media coverage of the general elections
 - And also the hot issues that attract attention

IMPACT?

- No one I know votes



“For the general election there was lots of information everywhere, even at my work. For the local elections I didn’t see much at all.”





Candidates: We don't know who to vote for



ME & MY WORLD

RELEVANCE?

ELECTIONS?

CANDIDATES?

IMPACT?

- “Who are these people?”
 - No strong personalities (unlike the general elections)
 - No party lines to guide who to vote for (and some cynicism over the ‘independent’ claim which increases mistrust)
 - For some – no candidates that I can relate to (ethnicity)
 - Incumbent Councillors and Local Board members are unknown and “invisible”
 - What do they do?
 - The Candidate booklet is an intimidating amount of reading (and candidates may not say much about what they want to achieve)



“With the general elections you see and hear about the parties and the candidates all the time. You get to know them and you can then make a choice on which ones you like.”

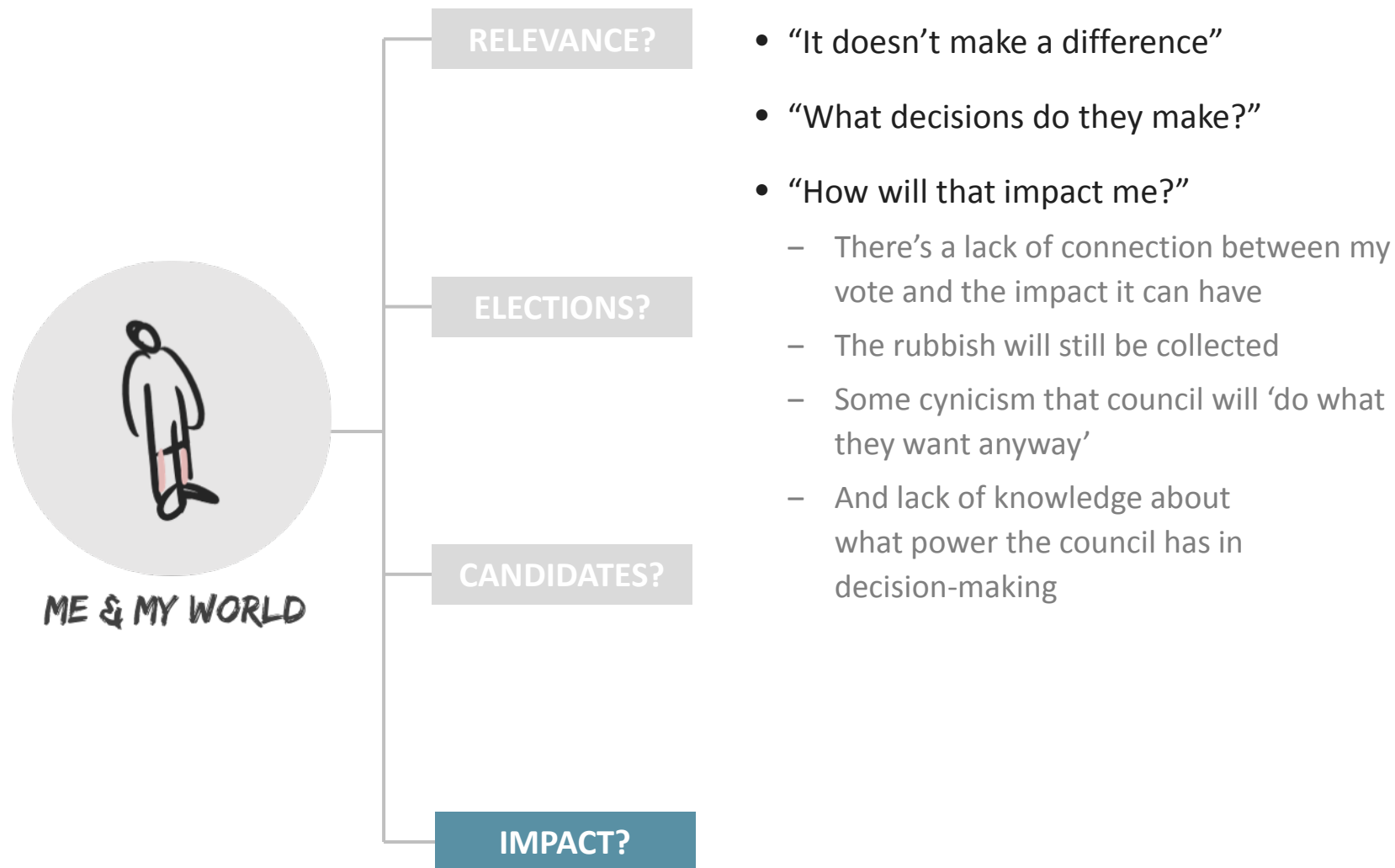
“I didn’t see the point in voting, I didn’t know any of the candidates or what they believed in, or stood for.”

“There is so much to read, when will you ever get through it?”





Impact: What difference can my vote make?



“

“I think they are limited to managing minor things like road maintenance / repairs.”

“What can council do for me?”

“What’s in it for me?”

”



2

Barriers to voting – specific to different communities



Additional barriers among migrants

- The 'general' barriers of lack of knowledge of council and the elections and low motivation are compounded by:
 - Recent migrants are busy trying to get settled in so wider issues such as voting are a low priority
 - Language - there is 'so much to read' in the candidate booklet
 - Disengagement driven by racism – not feeling accepted
- Additional barriers include:
 - Some permanent residents are not aware they are allowed to vote
 - Some also believe if they vote they will get called up for jury service (and if they do not attend they will be fined)
 - Unsure about whether to engage on issues – maybe that's NZ culture?



"Some of the issues that I have, I hesitate talking about it because that may be NZ culture and that's how things work around here. I don't think about taking actions to fix it."

(Korean non-voter)



Additional barriers in the disabled community

- Typically even less connected / disengaged and aware of council
- Not relevant, nothing's going to change
e.g. can't use public toilets, public transport, yet still pay tax / rates
- Getting through life is enough of a challenge
- 'Paperwork fatigue' – need to fill out forms for many things (e.g. WINZ assessments)
- Low education levels among the deaf community (literacy levels of an 8 year old)
- So an even greater need for very simple, plain language, concrete information
- A huge amount of reading for the blind and severely dyslexic – e.g. an hour and a half to have the Candidate booklet read aloud
- Ranking is difficult – especially when there are many candidates
- Concerns over confidentiality when filling out the voting papers
- Accessibility to mailboxes (wheelchair users)



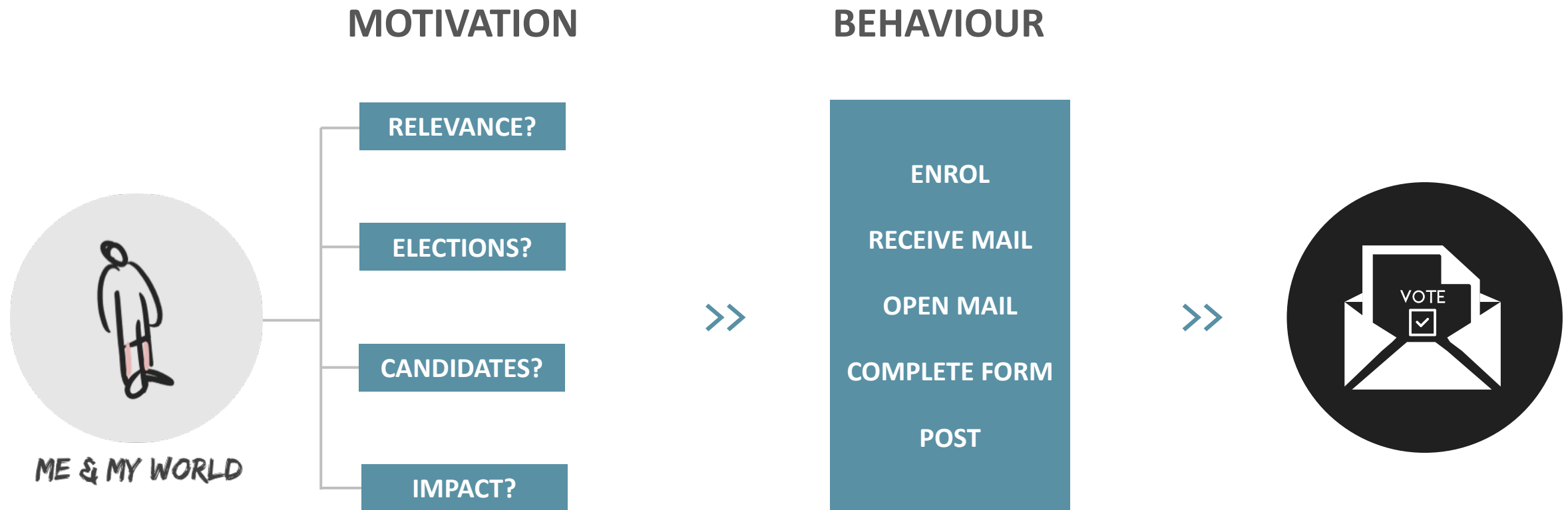
“Just getting through the day is a mission – voting at the local level is not a top priority.”

“People feel disenchanting. They think ‘will any goodness come out of it?’”





Summary of barriers



Once they have the motivation – there are still several steps to complete the process where we may lose people.



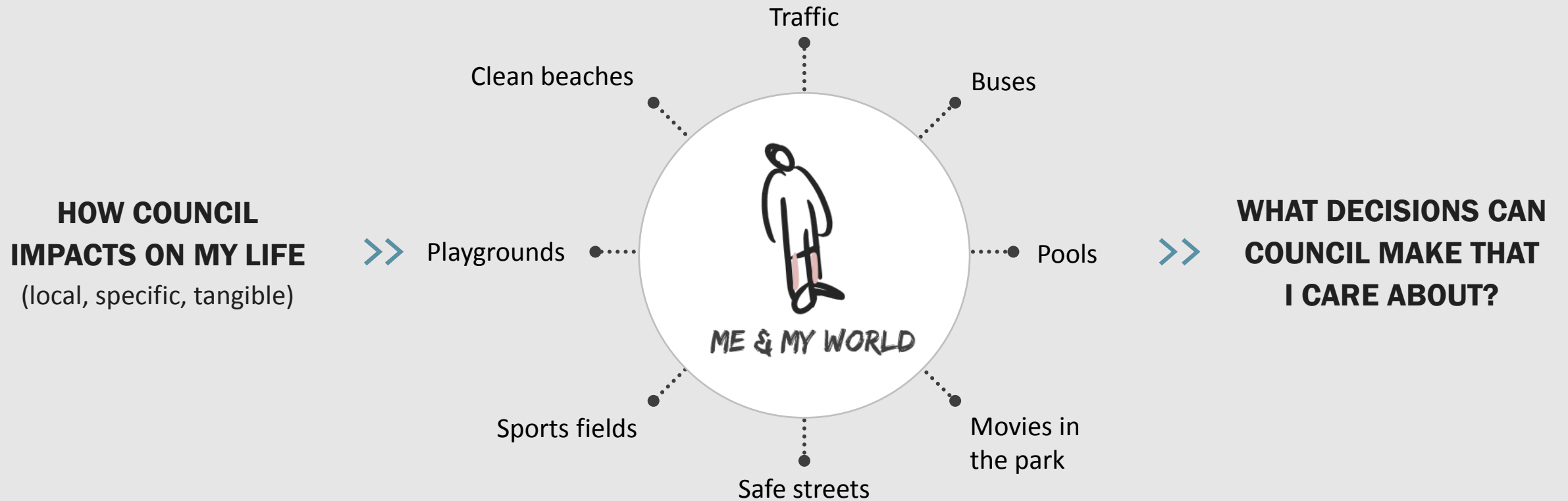
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**How can we motivate
people to vote?**



Breaking through the 'bubble': how can we make council relevant?

- Show what council does across many facets – some will be relevant to 'me'



How can my vote make a difference?

- Can we link the things 'I care about' with the decisions the elected members make?



THINGS I CARE ABOUT:

Westwave is packed – we
need another pool

Our playground is scummy

Why do students have to pay
so much for the bus?



WHAT DECISIONS CAN THEY MAKE?

Mayor

Councillors

Local Board
Members

Explaining stuff

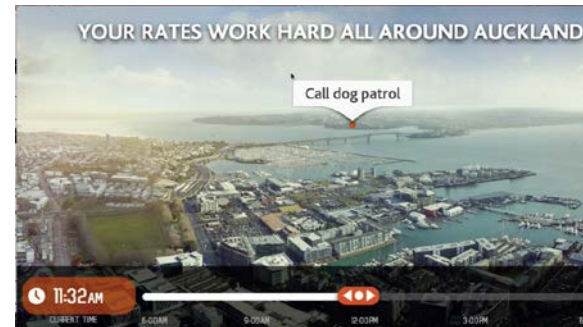
- Council and the elections seem pretty complex. A few examples have given us some pointers.



Video produced for candidates (edited for general public) :
Helpful though could be more enthusiastic, and have more simple language



How Auckland Council works:
Good use of visuals, but too much information, too long, tone is a bit boring, numbers of councilors and board members quickly becomes overwhelming and people switch off



'Your rates work hard all around Auckland':
Shows the variety of council services but too fast to take in



Our Park, Our Places:
Good concept. A bit long.

NZ Herald video within article: good concept – execution is a little ‘boring’; dollar amounts seem “unrealistic” to some. Could incorporate the \$ in every \$100 to make it easier to understand the proportion of money spent (and how much is spent on transport – an important area for Aucklanders).



“It’s a good way to show people that water, bus stop etc. - what affects your life and how policies may impact your life. Makes the council relevant to everyone.”



NEW ZEALAND

Council services affecting you throughout your day

29 Sep, 2016 8:59pm

2 minutes to read



By: **Ben Hill**
Reporter, NZ Herald
ben.hill@nzherald.co.nz
[@benhillNZH](https://twitter.com/benhillNZH)



From the moment you jump into the shower in the morning until you stagger back home later that night after a few post-work beers, council services are affecting you every step of the way.

The hot water cascading out of your showerhead and snapping you out of your slumber is provided by Watercare, one of six council-controlled organisations.

It draws, treats and delivers water through a network of pipes, and also deals with wastewater in much of the city. Auckland Council issues consents for the installation of water and septic tanks.

The council also picks up the stuff you don't want any more, through rubbish and recycling collections, and inorganic rubbish pickups.

It maintains the footpaths that you use to walk to the bus stop in order to get to work, and also runs the bus service that you will use once you get there through Auckland Transport.

Once lunchtime rolls around, a quick bite relaxing under a tree at a nearby park is an appealing option, and council services make that a possibility through maintaining the city's parks.

They also provide food licensing and grades to the cafe you bought your lunch from.

Your after-work drink also comes under the council's influence, with local alcohol policies dictating the location, number and trading hours of licensed premises.

Ideas to inform and engage - connecting voting with what I care about

- Use the stories of a range of different types of Aucklanders and/or influencers and/or council staff – ‘a day in the life’ – to connect people with council and decisions



What's important to me / what I care about, and why I'm voting

Things that **'enhance my life'** (me and my family), such as:

Parks, BBQs, sports facilities (fields, courts), playgrounds, pools, libraries, night markets, bush walks, beaches, inorganic collections, movie nights, festivals

Issues that are important, of concern, or are contentious, such as:

- Transport (e.g. bus and cycle lanes, public transport that I do or could use, upgrades to roads)
- Housing (e.g. cost, intensification)
- Waste management (e.g. inorganic rubbish collections)
- Flooding, sewage (fixing problems)
- Social issues in my community (e.g. liquor stores in South Auckland, nothing to do in the West (licensing trust limits), poverty, homelessness, crime, vandalism, graffiti, safety on the streets) and social issues pertinent to me (for youth this includes suicide, alcohol, drugs, youth offending, injustice, discrimination)

Council staff – their jobs and what they care about: design the playgrounds, maintain the sports fields, help the water quality, plant trees, take care of cemeteries, pick up rubbish, mow lawns ... and why they are voting (safer streets, cleaner water to swim in)

Communicating with potential voters – overall suggestions

Super simple, everyday language
(words like 'strategies, policies, vision' are too hard and abstract)

Diagrams, images
and visuals

Short and punchy

Bite sized pieces that can add up to a whole picture

Specific, tangible
examples

Local – things in my area/
that affect me

Avoid too many numbers
turns people off and switches into rational not emotive brain

Tone – emotive

Humorous

- Could potentially be tongue in cheek
- E.g. “You post it? That’s still a thing?”
- “Can’t we just vote on an app?” “Ah... no. Not yet”
- “You mean I have to read all this?” “Well, yes it does look like a lot of words, but they really want you to know who they are. And there is a website with a few videos...”

‘Vote Saturday’: focuses attention on one date + one stop shop + meet candidates

The ‘Vote Saturday’ idea is strong and broadly appealing

- Connects to the general elections – a familiar behaviour
- The ‘one stop shop’ to enrol, vote and post makes it seem easier
- Free event / activities adds the ‘what’s in it for me’ and an incentive to go (entertaining)
- Potentially gives voters the opportunity to see / hear / meet the candidates
- Has the potential to feel community oriented – people coming together

- Ideas ...

- Music
- Candidates on stage between music
- Local celebs
- School involvement – competition to go
- Activities for kids
- Stalls from local health providers, community groups
- No gang colours (community friendly)
- Free public transport to get there
- Rewards for sharing on social media (spread the word)



“This means I’d make it a priority on that particular day. I’d make the effort. It’s too easy to forget or get too busy otherwise and not vote.”



‘Vote Saturday’: targeted events

- Could also be an event held on the marae
 - Motivational speakers – energetic, clear
 - Local kura entertainment
 - Free kai
 - Advertise on social media
 - Ballot box
- Places to vote for disabled community
 - With trained volunteers
 - Ballot boxes
 - As per Council assistance provided at the Foundation for the Blind 2016
 - Broaden awareness (for those with dyslexia, non-Foundation members, etc.)
 - Volunteers able to go to people’s homes
 - Add in disability organisations – people are familiar going there, confident of parking, access, etc.
 - E.g. Yes Disability & Muscular Dystrophy in the same building
 - An 0800 number for a week staffed by people that understand the community ‘0800 my voice counts’



“Whānau encouraging whānau”

“Make it an exciting day.”

“People would feel reassured.”



Connecting voters to the candidates

- The free event is seen as a good way for people to meet and hear from the candidates
- The 'Show your love' website is helpful
 - Would like notifications when there are updates, new videos
- The Tinder style app is appealing, especially to younger potential voters
 - A couple of people expressed concern it may reduce credibility
- Guide candidates to communicate in plain language:
 - What their passion is and what difference they want to make
 - Videos (doesn't have to be high tech – e.g. Jacinda on Facebook)
- Voters would also like an online questionnaire to help you work out who fits best with your views (e.g. general elections Vote Compass and On The Fence)



"I don't have the time to do the research as I'm very busy with family and work. I need them to give me all the information – not have to go and find it."

"[We vote in the general elections] because we know them, you see them on TV and in the paper and get to know what they're like. We don't know these other people from a bar of soap."



"This would be good as we can look at it from home – don't have to go anywhere."

Tinder style app

Scan through the candidate profiles

Make your choice by swiping right for yes, left for no

Create your short list



"Auckland Council is keeping up with the times."



Can we turn the numbers into a positive?

- Could we be brave and use messages about the power of numbers to make a difference
- The advantage of so few people voting is that you and your community's votes can influence the election
 - 'If we all voted we'd make a difference'
 - 'Papakura is 25% Māori, if we all voted, we could get this person in...'
 - 'Papakura doesn't look Māori – if you took all the people out you could be in Sydney – so have a voice about our place'
 - 1 in 4 have a disability – let's get together, each one person's voice is important



This approach is not motivating

Other initiatives

- Online voting
 - Popular among all participants except one (works in IT)
 - No concerns expressed
 - Some see it as more secure than postal voting (others can take your papers)
 - Particularly important for the disabled community (more accessible – can use assisted technology / easier physically, more secure - may not need support people)
- Text reminder to vote
 - Also popular
 - Given there's cost involved in (a) collecting numbers and (b) sending texts, could it be trialled?
 - Could we encourage people to text each other the reminder to vote?
 - Incentivise text reminders?



“

“That would be really convenient as we are largely housebound now.”

“We are always on our phone anyway, so if done right it will encourage us to vote.”

”

Other initiatives cont'd

- Migrant awareness campaign
 - Eligibility to vote if have permanent residency
 - Community and ethnic media
- Civics education
 - In schools
 - Need a reminder / refresher before they leave school that they will be eligible to vote (soon)
- Ballot boxes
 - Good to have highly visible boxes in libraries and council service centres
 - Highly visible boxes on the streets may be good for PR / Instagram? (given the expense/logistics make it difficult to roll these out in many locations)



Community influencers

- The council advisory panel members (push videos out through social media)
- Church pastors, ministers, members
 - Glen and Priscilla Bilby, C3
- Kaumatua, marae chairperson
- Teachers (school – for parents and students, and tertiary for students)
- Student leaders
- Sports coaches
- Sports stars (All Blacks, Silver Ferns, NRL, Wheel Blacks, Valerie Adams, Richie McCaw, Michael Jones)
- Lorde, Stan Walker, Taika Waititi



Community influencers cont'd

- Sheldon Rua (dancer, actor, spoken word poet, Samoan/Māori/German, unique look)
- Dennis Malala, Jimi Jackson (social media influencers)
- DJ Reminisce
- Laughing Samoans, Tofiga Fepulea'i
- Parris Goebel
- Brooke Loader (South Auckland community advocate, lawyer, mum, stood for Manurewa Local Board by-election (came second) and for the Labour Party in Waikato in 2017)



Summary of key ideas

Connect
Council &
decisions
with my life

Vote Saturday

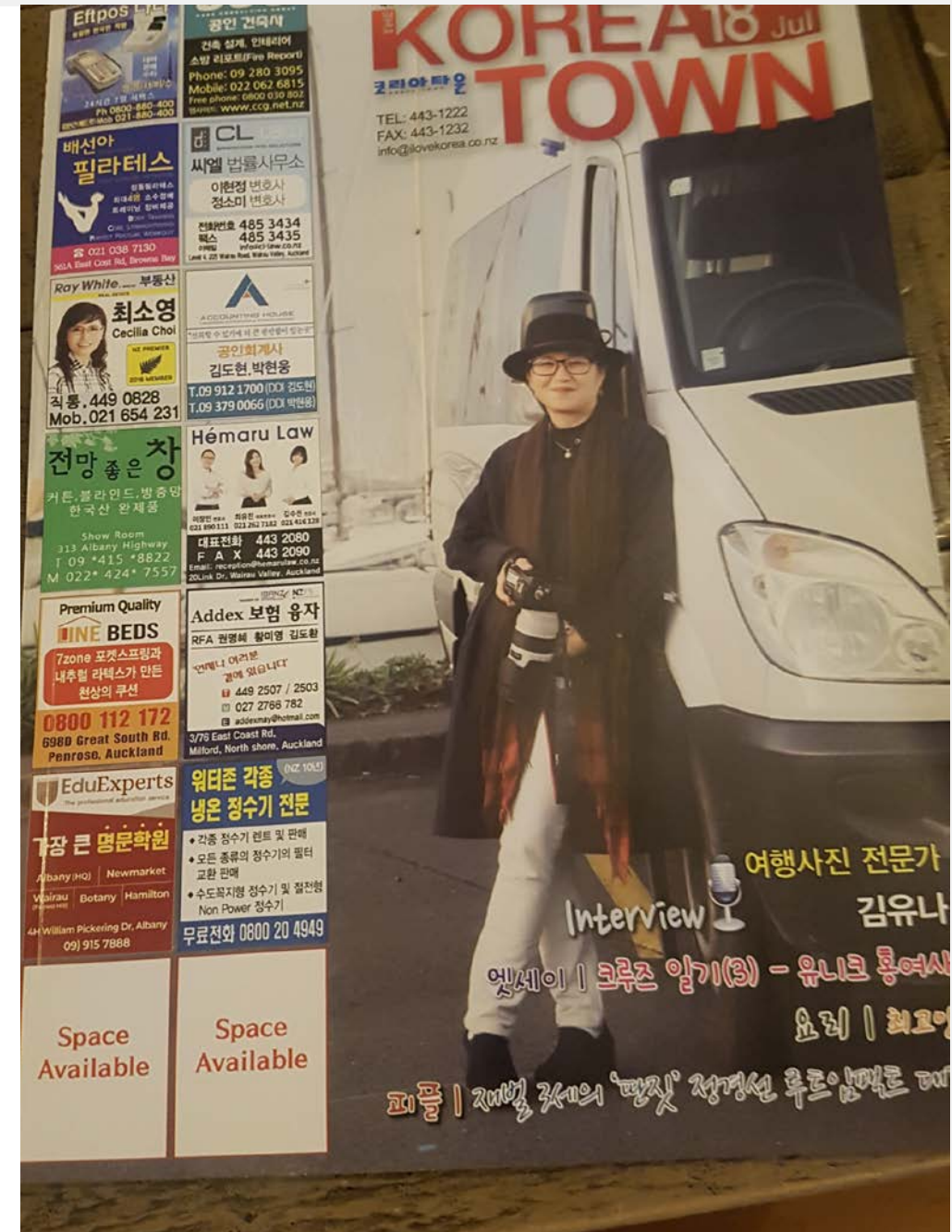
Influencers

Connect
voters with
Candidates

Online
voting

Sources of information / media

- Social media
 - Facebook (especially for the deaf community)
 - Instagram
 - YouTube
 - Neighbourly
 - WeChat (Chinese)
- Websites
 - NZ Herald, Stuff, TradeMe, www.nzkoreapost.com
- Print
 - Local newspapers (especially for the older community), Korea Town magazine, NZ Chinese Herald
- Radio
 - Mai FM, The Breeze, Flava, Newstalk ZB
- TV
 - WTV, Panda TV (Chinese), Fresh TV (Pacific), Tagata Pasifika (older Pacific)



Sources of information / media

- Community events and public places
 - Having stands, handing out brochures (in other languages as appropriate)
- Posters in high traffic areas
 - Supermarkets (and Asian supermarkets)
 - Gym noticeboards (for youth)
 - Doctors waiting rooms
 - Restaurants
 - Precincts where ethnic groups frequent
 - Dairies in targeted geographical areas
 - Toilet doors in shopping malls
- Gig guides (for youth)
- Hold a competition to spot the ads or posters



“Find a set number of posters round where they live. Take pics and post to Twitter. Win something silly. Grabs your attention. Generate big group involvement, they are advertising for you.”





4

Unsuccessful candidates' experiences





What motivated the candidates to stand?

- Generally motivated to help their community / communities (ethnic, youth, local)
- Interested in being involved in politics – that’s how to make real change
 - One is a member of a political party
 - Another worked for a political party, had been President of the student union and stood for another city council as a student (and “grew up with politics”)
 - One has been encouraged by her dad to get into politics since she was 12 because she is outspoken
- Encouragement from others helped
 - One received encouragement from the community to stand
 - Another was encouraged by the party they worked for
- Deciding whether to stand was difficult for one candidate
 - Weighing up how well they would be able to represent their community if they got a job after they finishing studying
 - Now has a job so is thinking about whether they can balance their relatively new job – still learning / progressing in their career – with the role



“I could see the needs for helping Chinese to fit into society because I was one of them.”

“I love talking to people ... discussing with them in relation to them on big or small issues.”

“From my little knowledge of the world if you want to make a core difference you have to go into the political side. Donating time and effort to the community is one thing but having the tool behind you... to make the real difference and real decisions rather than making noise – that’s why I wanted to [go into politics].”

“[Politics] is a way to make people’s lives better and make a difference.”

I’ve always wanted to be involved in politics.”



What are the barriers to potential candidates standing for council?

In the 2015 elections campaign research we talked with ‘natural leaders’ (potential candidates) and ‘influencers’ (people who might encourage others to stand) across different ethnic groups (Asian, Māori, Pākehā) and youth. We found significant barriers to standing in the elections that were common across all groups:

Cost

- For billboards and promotion, especially if standing as an independent candidate

Lack of knowledge about what is involved

- Is it a full time job? Could I make a career out of it?

Doubt that they can make a real difference

- What degree of influence does a Local Board have? Why bother standing if I can’t make any real change?
- “Now it’s a super city they have less clout”

The council environment does not ‘fit’ me

- Perception that council is business and growth-focused rather than community-need focused, and concern about the need to toe the line
- Perception that council is bureaucratic (from dealing with council in their community role) so would prefer to work somewhere with “less hoops” to go through

Barriers to standing cont'd

Fear of failure

- Fear that you'll get hardly any votes
- And once failed, unlikely to try again

Unfair competition

- The experienced politicians make more noise, get all the attention

Intimidation and bullying of young people by the old hands

- *“Not a safe space for young people. I've been to a candidate night, you see adults pick on the young person as the weaker one. Egos!”*

Party affiliation turning voters off

- Concern if you stand for a party, people will not vote for you because of the party

Concern by young people that a party or group will treat them as the token young person

- *“Get the young person, get the young vote, they can do our Facebook.”*

Barriers to standing cont'd

A need to be endorsed by the community

- This is hard to achieve for young people (especially young Pacific people)
- Young people would be afraid to stand because they know they'll get a response like: "What do you know?" "Who are you to do that?" (Pacific)
- For Pacific, you don't stand as an individual, you stand because your community endorses and puts you forward to serve the community: "The concept of an individual standing is flawed."
- 'Tall Poppy' syndrome (for Māori and Pacific)

Burn out of people who are active in the community



"We burn out young people. They show a bit of initiative and get put on lots of stuff."

(Māori)



The experiences of standing vary according to expectations – positive

1. THE NOVICE, DO EVERYTHING BY MYSELF, GIVE IT A TRY – HAPPY WITH THE OUTCOME

- Registering as a candidate was straightforward
- Campaigning – simple, not sophisticated:
 - Door knocking – received positive feedback and encouragement
 - Advertising with posters / hoardings
 - One spent less than \$200: posters on friends' walls (did not know the rules for hoardings so didn't put any up) and in letterboxes; focused on their church and used Instagram and Facebook – targeting young people
 - The other put up hoardings (but didn't realise until after the election the area of voters was wider)
 - Candidate meetings
- Pleased with the results – got a lot of votes
 - Good learning experience
 - And good experience getting to meet people, hear what they have to say



“Just trying it out is a good experience – meeting people, a lot of people, getting to know your community, what demands there are in your community. You have a positive influence – get more people interested. It’s fun – you get to do something with your family and friends – you can’t do it alone.”

“I came fifth – for an individual who came from nowhere, a Chinese migrant, a housewife from Pukekohe. It gave me great confidence, I will stand again.”



The experiences of standing vary according to expectations – disappointed

2. THE CONTENDER, WANTED TO WIN – DISAPPOINTED WITH THE OUTCOME

- Put a lot of work in
- Campaigning:
 - Leafleting, door knocking, malls and markets
 - Candidate meetings
 - Did some work with the media
 - Had a campaign team – got coverage
- Regrets standing
 - Spent a lot of money that could have been used to study overseas (deferred acceptance into the London School of Economics)
 - Did okay for a first time candidate but lower than expected given the work put in
 - Feels they let their community down (ethnic community and their party) by not winning as they had volunteered
- But may stand again – training ground for national politics



*“I would like to stand again.
Local government is a good way
to help your community.”*



What would make it easier for candidates?

- Easier access to Local Board events, discussions, decisions and agendas
 - So they can contribute / have their own opinions
- Ensure people don't miss out on opportunities to speak
 - Some did not know about / were not invited to all the events (held by other organisations)



Why fill out the demographic profile?

"To make myself represented, to pave the way for people of colour."

"Being responsible, respectful of the whole process, letting the authorities know my appreciation and my thoughts."



Suggestions for encouraging others to stand (from candidates & potential candidates)

- Demystify the roles
 - A 'day in the life', what is the time commitment, what is the salary
 - Illustrate what local board members can achieve
 - Make what the local board does more visible
 - A site or app for the local community that shows what the Board does, meeting agendas, plus links to community groups so people can see what is happening in my local area, what groups might be advocating for (e.g. bike lanes), the business association, etc.
 - Local board members being more proactive and visible about what they do and encouraging people to vote and to stand
- Profile current elected members
 - Make them seem more approachable – *"they're not out of touch with reality"*
- Use role models to encourage people to stand
- Convey that it's an easy process
 - Some Councillors have said it is quite a complicated process



*"It's almost like a masonic
secret society."*



Suggestions for encouraging others to stand (from candidates & potential candidates)

- Partner with community groups (iwi, local ethnic boards, youth groups) and hold workshops
 - Use the advisory panel members to help connect with the respective communities, e.g. youth who can connect with other young people
 - Explain the process and the difference that you can make and why it's important
 - Demystify campaigning – give advice / provide resources on how to campaign (putting a campaign team together, where to campaign)
- Publicise the advisory panels and the work they are doing to bring each community's voice to the table
- Shoulder tap advisory panel members (and any who were interviewed for the roles but did not get in)
- Set up an internship programme – to see the “inside workings” of a Ward
- Civics education
 - Mock elections in high schools
 - Explain why it matters



“Campaigning is not as scary as it seems.”

“[The advisory panel] is an amazing talent pool.”



The ideas candidates think would help

- Both pink and blue booklets are useful (two only saw the pink one but thought the blue would have been useful)
- Case studies would be encouraging
- Mentoring (one received mentoring from a former Board member)
- The number of votes required to win – make the stats available
- Information sessions – face to face is preferred but could also be live streamed and videoed (able to watch later)
- Shoulder tapping from community influencers (teachers, university lecturers, church leaders)
- Council staff talking at community events



What messages would encourage people to stand?

- A paid job
 - Especially relevant for young people training in community development (few jobs in that area)
- Stories and ambassadors
- Reassurance that you do have something special to offer and you can do it
 - *“You don’t have to be a PhD, a doctor or a business owner, [young people] bring something that no one else can – knowledge of youth issues, the community, the places and spaces to hangout. They know what’s happening.”*
- A good way to network / build your community
 - Connecting for the good of the community (Pacific)
 - Networking (for new migrants this can be important as their careers are often put back by 10 years when they arrive)
- Fun and interesting
- For Pacific - a communications suggestion was to build on the concept of the navigator – from one island to another, into a new world
 - *“Steering your people in the right direction... steady bearing... venturing off to find a new world mentality.”*



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Ngā mihi
Mālō
谢谢
Thank you.