

Simplifying Local Government

Head Start Pathway Community Engagement

High-level engagement summary – round 1 feedback

Total 323 online submissions received:

- 297 submissions via Participate survey
- 26 submissions via Rangatahi survey

Facebook poll:

- 2,723 individual users
- 9,155 votes

High-level engagement summary – round 2 feedback

Total 782 submissions received:

- 771 submissions via Participate survey
- 11 submissions via email

Facebook poll:

- 241 votes/individual users

Option preference (round 1 - ranked)

- **Taupō and/or South Waikato:** A clear majority felt most closely connected with our inland, geothermal and tourism-aligned neighbours and not with Tauranga, which is bigger and has the perception of being debt-ridden
- **Eastern Bay of Plenty:** Mixed support, emphasizing boundaries and shared interests.
- **Western Bay and Maketū** (part of Western Bay including Maketū-Kaituna River catchment)

Option preference (round 2 - ranked)

- **Taupō/South Waikato:** Identifies primary sector interests (forestry and heavy agriculture) align naturally to the South Waikato and Taupō production corridors.
- **BOP All-of-region:** Accepted for total provincial logic but intensely feared due to potential Tauranga domination.
- **Eastern BOP:** Similar socio-demographic mix with Rotorua, comparable levels of deprivation, provincial infrastructure strains, high proportions of Māori land and population
- **Kaituna catchment:** Heavily supported by submitters prioritising holistic waterway boundaries.
- **Other:** Highly nuanced preferences e.g., pair with Taupō for tourism and health alignment but leave South Waikato out due to a perceived lack of shared community interests.

High-level survey themes (round 1 - ranked)

- **Local voice and Rotorua identity:** Strong concern amalgamation could weaken distinct Rotorua identity and shift decisions away from people who understand the district.
- **Taupō and/or South Waikato alignment, resistance to Tauranga:** Most want to join with nearby inland councils Taupō and/or South Waikato and not Tauranga with bigger debt and different priorities.
- **Rates and financial risk:** Scepticism that reform will reduce costs, with concerns about higher rates, inherited debt, transition costs, and unfunded infrastructure pressures.
- **Rushed process and inadequate consultation:** Many consider government is moving too fast and did not give communities enough time or information to properly have a say.
- **Māori/iwi representation and Treaty obligations:** Concern a new council structure could weaken Māori representation, Te Arawa relationships, Treaty obligations, and rohe-based decision-making.

Criteria most important – round 2 (ranked)

- Financial health
- Local voice and political representation
- Communities of interest
- Economic alignment
- Mana whenua views and commitments
- Ability to deliver the Government's reform priorities

Pātai?