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| **Working Smarter – how New Zealand Public Health Units are working smarter in partnership with local government to strengthen food environments** |
| **Setting/problem**  All New Zealanders should be able to enjoy food environments where the healthy choice is their first and easiest choice. However, the current reality is that New Zealand [NZ] food environments can often be dominated by unhealthy options, and are not supported by strong public policy[[1]](#footnote-1). Thus, for Public Health Units [PHUs] in NZ, strengthening the food environments in which their populations live, learn, work and play is a core part of their health promotion work.  Local government can have significant influence over the local food environment through procurement, regulation, and provision of food and drink. PHUs in NZ traditionally have a submissions-based engagement with local government, without on-going involvement in change. Influence and support for change in food environments is therefore often limited.  **Intervention**  Auckland Regional Public Health Service [ARPHS] and Wellington Regional Public Health [RPH] sought to improve their engagement with local governments to improve the food environments under their jurisdiction.  For both PHUs, shifting their input more upstream and on-going was the main focus. This included building relationships through platforms such as the Mayoral Forum and Healthy Auckland Together, and providing value through developing practical food and drink guidelines.  We will outline the processes and learnings from partnering with:   * the Auckland ‘super city’ Council combining eight regional, city and district councils, and * the Upper Hutt City Council   **Outcomes**   * Genuinely reciprocal and ongoing partnerships with local government, resulting in building in-house champions for public health and involvement of PHU throughout policy making processes. * Development and implementation of practical food and drink guidelines based on the District Health Board and Ministry of Health’s Food and Drink Policy for all areas of local government jurisdiction: leisure centres, catering, cafeterias, civic functions, and events. * Sustained changes in food and drink procurement, provision and regulations by Auckland and Upper Hutt City Councils’   **Implications**  Building reciprocal relationships with local government has proven to be a key factor in strengthening local food environments for ARPHS and RPH.  Health promotion agencies in NZ and internationally are encouraged to review and explore their own engagement with local government, and work smarter for sustainable change in their own food systems.  **Preferred presentation format:** Oral |

1. [www.informas.org/nz-food-environment-study/](http://www.informas.org/nz-food-environment-study/) [↑](#footnote-ref-1)