

2026



Key trends, strategies
and ideas for 2026

THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT MARKETING PLAYBOOK



The future of local government marketing

In 2026, communities expect personalised services, seamless digital experiences, transparency, and storytelling that reflects their identity and aspirations. In a continually-evolving digital landscape, local governments and councils must rethink how they communicate, engage, and deliver value.

At Mo Works, we've worked with councils across Australia to modernise their marketing strategies, helping them build meaningful community connections, attract investment and visitors, and position their regions as thriving, future-ready destinations.

This toolkit offers actionable insights to help councils navigate this evolving landscape, strengthening connections with their communities, attracting new audiences, and achieving broader objectives.



What's new?

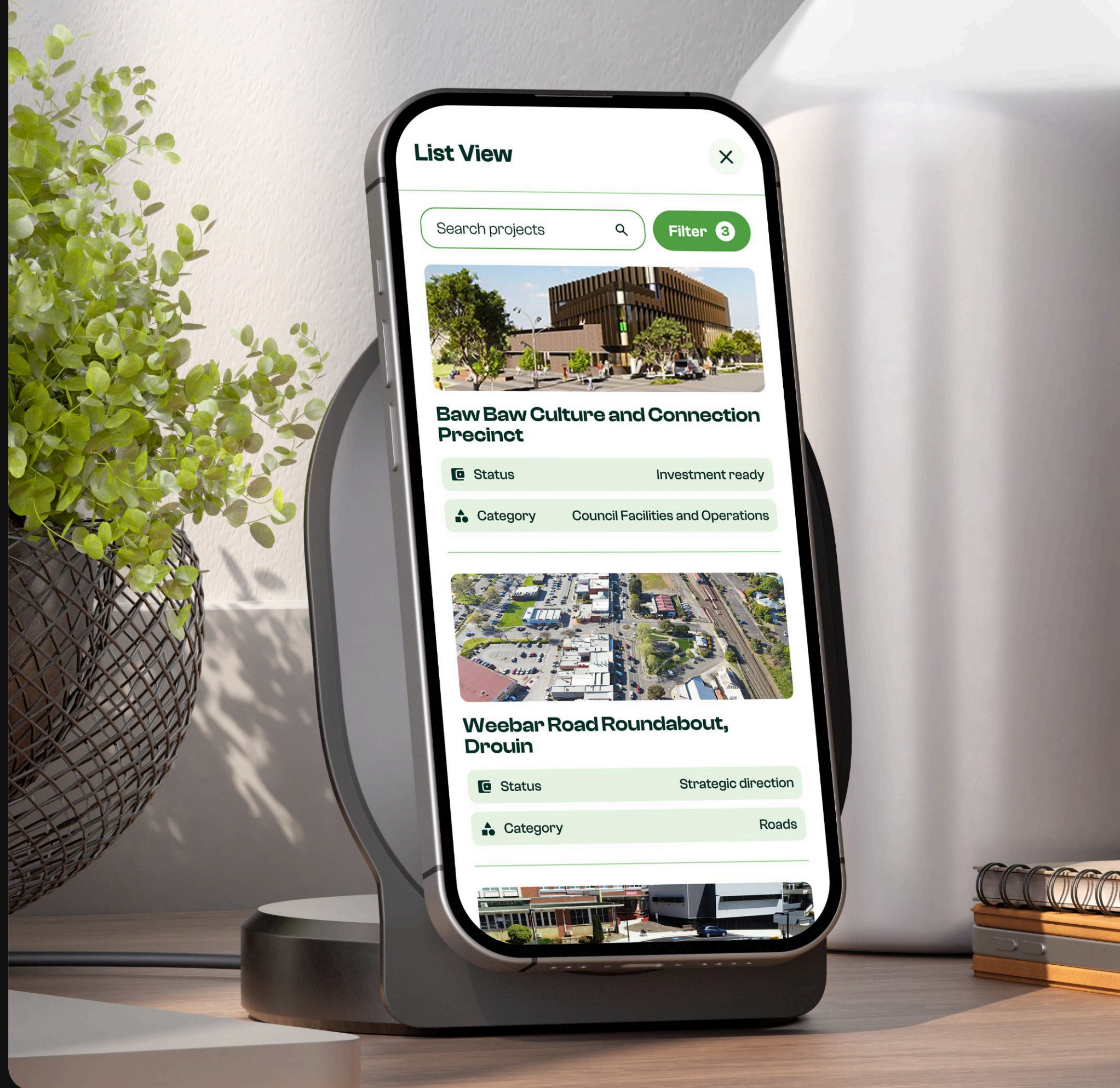
So, what's new in local government marketing?

Traditionally, council marketing has focused on service delivery: in short, rates, roads, and rubbish. While these pillars remain essential, marketing in 2026 plays a far broader and more strategic role in shaping a region's identity and economic future.

This year, marketing is shaped by responsible AI, stronger digital inclusion standards, data-driven place branding, and the expectation of seamless, mobile-first service experiences.

Residents want transparency, faster communication, and more accessible content, while councils are under pressure to integrate systems, measure real outcomes, and collaborate more closely with communities, creators and local businesses.

But with the right strategy and tools, even resource-limited councils can deliver smarter, more human-centred marketing that builds trust, drives engagement and supports broader goals.



Key trends shaping council marketing in 2026

The way people consume information has changed, so our strategies need to as well. Here are the top marketing trends councils must embrace to stay relevant.



1 Responsible AI and smarter digital experiences

AI has moved from experimentation to everyday utility. Councils are using it to scale content, improve accessibility, streamline customer service and personalise communication, with a strong focus on governance, transparency and human oversight.

- Set up an AI-powered knowledge base that helps staff draft accurate responses to common resident questions, with mandatory human approval.
- Use AI to automatically generate accessible formats (captions, transcripts and plain-language summaries) for all major announcements and videos.
- Introduce an internal “AI in Communications” policy outlining approved tools, review processes and transparency guidelines.



Key Marketing Trends for 2026

2 Digital inclusion and mobile-first communication

With widening digital inequality and rising mobile usage, councils must prioritise accessible, mobile-first experiences. This includes clearer service pathways, multilingual content, captioned video, and alternative non-digital channels to ensure no resident is left behind.

- Redesign top service pages (rates, waste, animal services, permits) so they load fast, are mobile-first, and use clear step-by-step instructions.
- Partner with libraries and neighbourhood houses to run short digital-skills sessions for residents with low digital access.
- Offer every major update in multiple formats: mobile-friendly web page, captioned video, print posters, and easy-to-read versions.

Call to action

We are seeking investment in key strategic infrastructure to accelerate housing development in the Drouin and Warragul growth precinct.



Total Project \$5 Million

Current Investment \$800k

Your Investment \$4.2 Million



Impact Today, Shape Tomorrow

Baw Baw Shire Council is proactively looking for innovative ways to partner with government and developers to deliver identified catalyst projects. While the construction of projects contained within PSPs traditionally sits with developers, Council has the capacity to deliver these catalyst projects instead, should sufficient funding be available.

The Weebar Road Roundabout, Drouin provides a key link between existing and future properties and Drouin's town centre and train station. Constructing this roundabout is a PSP condition of three housing developments to the south of Drouin. Without the construction of this roundabout, the associated subdivisions are currently stalled.



Delivery of the Weebar Road Roundabout, Drouin will:

- ✓ Unlock the early delivery of an additional 2,521 residential dwellings within its catchment area providing housing for approximately 6,050 residents.
- ✓ Provide greater safety, efficient traffic movement and improved connectivity to Drouin's Town Centre, Train Station and Drouin Secondary College.
- ✓ Ensure the delivery of a new primary education facility within the development, which is unable to be delivered without this infrastructure.
- ✓ Incentivise the early delivery of supporting infrastructure and services within the Drouin growth area including a neighbourhood centre, community centre and new public open spaces.

3 Data-driven place branding and measurable outcomes

Marketing success is now measured by real-world impact – business enquiries, tourism activity, event participation and resident sentiment – not just impressions or follower counts. Councils are investing in better analytics, CRMs and dashboards to understand what works and continuously improve.

- Build a simple monthly insights dashboard tracking event attendance, business enquiries, tourism activity and social sentiment.
- Use A/B testing on social ads and newsletters to refine messaging and improve engagement across key demographics.
- Integrate a CRM or CDP for economic development and tourism teams to monitor enquiries, follow-ups and conversion outcomes.



4 Community-led storytelling and trusted local voices

Residents, local businesses and micro-influencers are some of your most credible storytellers. User-generated content, community takeovers and authentic local stories consistently outperform traditional council messaging and build deeper trust.

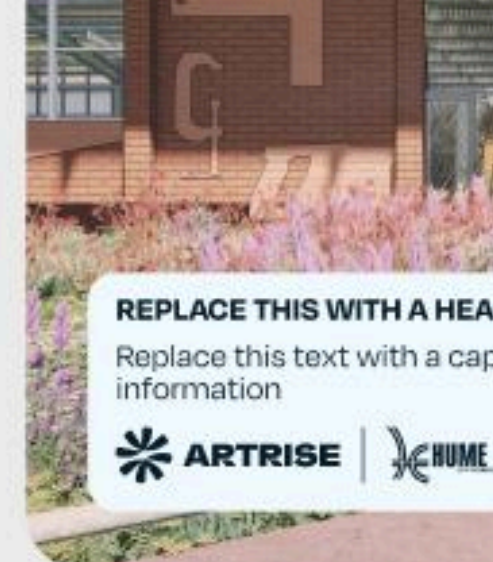
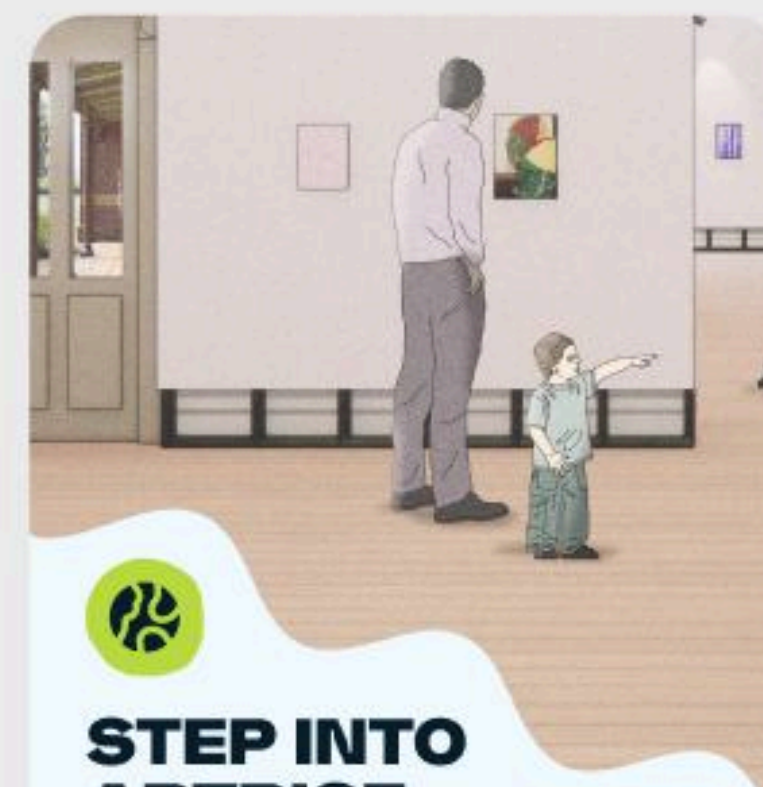
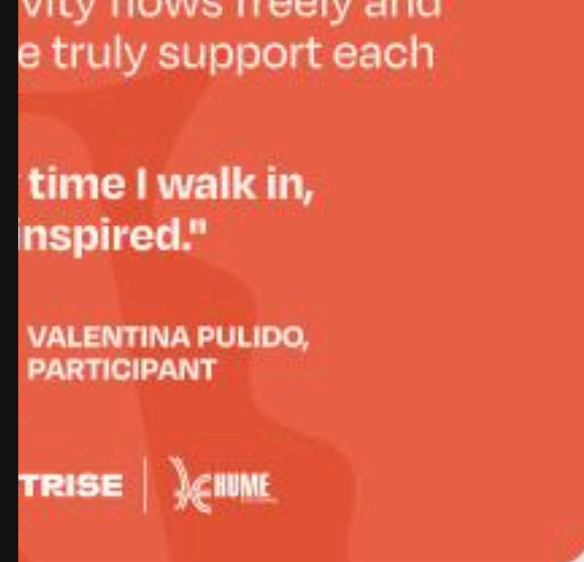
- Launch a fortnightly “Local Spotlight” video series featuring residents, community groups and small businesses.
- Encourage user-generated content by running seasonal photo or story competitions highlighting local parks, events or neighbourhoods.
- Collaborate with local micro-influencers or youth creators to promote council programs, events and sustainability initiatives.



5 Social Media: Beyond awareness to real engagement

Councils are shifting from broadcast-style posts to genuine, two-way interaction. Social platforms are now service channels, engagement tools and storytelling hubs.

- Use interactive features like polls, quizzes, story sliders and AMA sessions to involve residents directly in decisions and consultations.
- Create short-form, mobile-first videos across TikTok, Reels and YouTube Shorts to explain policies, showcase local wins and break down complex topics.
- Build niche community networks by collaborating with trusted micro-influencers, neighbourhood volunteers, youth creators and cultural leaders.



6 Data analytics and personalisation

Councils are moving toward smarter data ecosystems that improve decisions, campaigns and service delivery.

- Use AI-powered analytics to identify emerging community topics, sentiment trends, and service pain points across digital channels.
- Implement a centralised CRM or customer data platform (CDP) to personalise communications based on interests, service history or location.
- Leverage predictive modelling to anticipate resident needs (such as likely permit enquiries, event interests or waste-service spikes) and tailor campaigns accordingly.



7 Sustainability communication: Walking the talk

Residents expect councils not just to act sustainably, but to communicate clearly, consistently and honestly about their progress.

- Use simple, visual formats (infographics, animated explainers, interactive dashboards) to communicate complex environmental data.
- Provide transparent, regular reporting on net-zero targets, waste outcomes, biodiversity actions and climate adaptation projects.
- Engage residents with practical, community-driven sustainability challenges and incentives, such as water-saving goals, zero-waste weeks, composting programs or active transport campaigns.



Updated innovative tools to consider

Adopting cutting-edge tools allows councils to streamline processes and enhance community engagement.

Filter

Categories

- ☒ Sustainability and environment
- ☐ Tourism
- ☐ Health
- ☐ Bridges
- ☐ Catalyst projects
- ☐ Council facilities and operations
- ☐ Early years
- ☒ Land and precinct planning
- ☐ Community facilities
- ☐ Drainage
- ☐ Sports and recreation
- ☐ Arts and culture
- ☐ Business
- ☒ Housing
- ☐ Roads
- ☐ Town amenities
- ☐ Tracks and trails
- ☐ Precinct structure plans

Status

- ☐ Strategic direction
- ☐ Detailed scoping and options
- ☐ Funding secured
- ☐ Operation and maintenance
- ☐ Land and precinct planning
- ☐ Business case
- ☐ Delivery
- ☐ Concept and vision
- ☐ Investment ready
- ☒ Completion

Apply filters

Innovative Tools to Consider

AI-Assisted Knowledge Bases & Residents' Helpdesks

Provide fast, accurate, consistent information for high-volume enquiries.

Social Media Management Platforms

Streamline content scheduling and monitor community sentiment.

Multilingual Translation/Localisation Tools

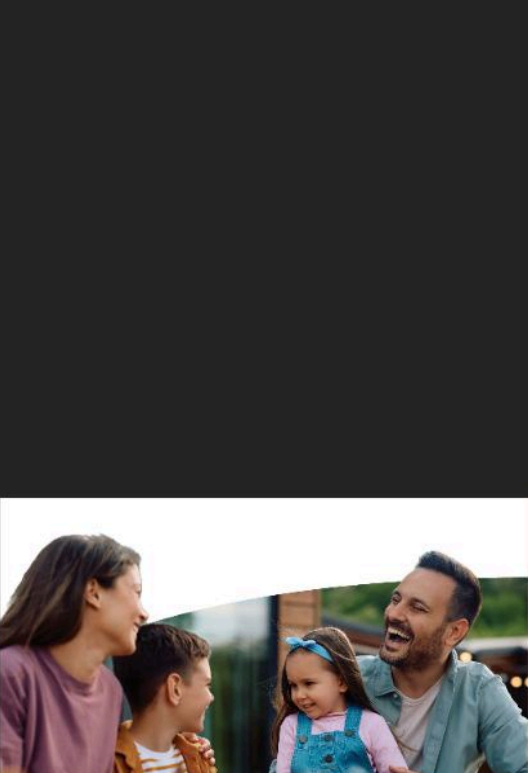
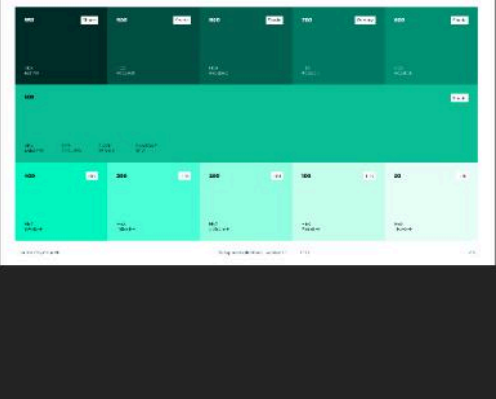
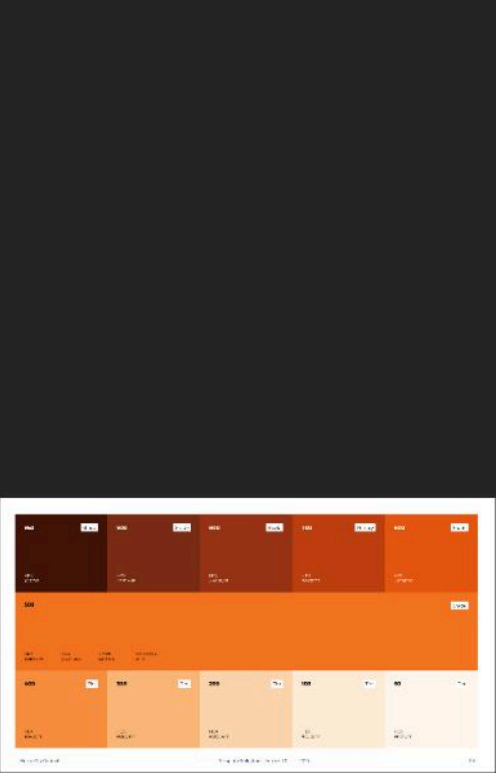
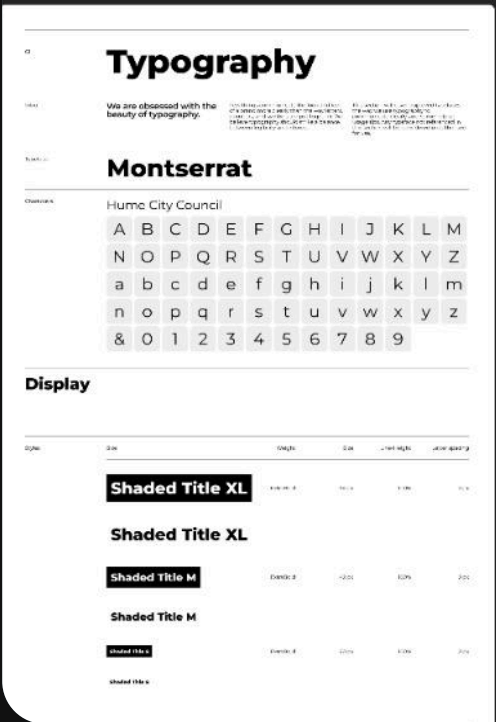
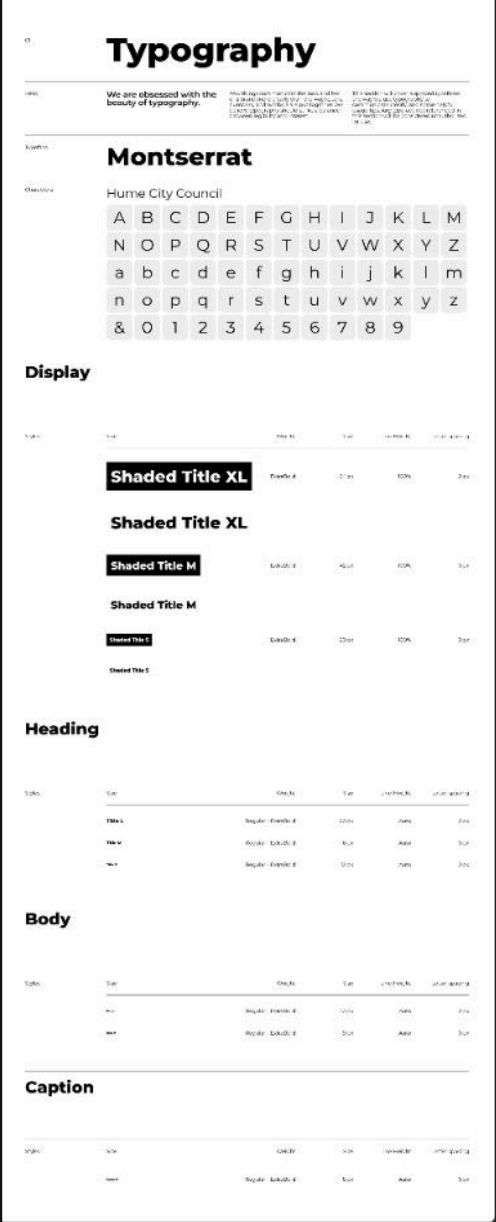
Make content more accessible for culturally diverse audiences, and auto-translate pages and videos with human review.

Automated Accessibility Tools

Automate checking for alt text, reading levels, colour contrast and broken links, to ensure all content meets WCAG 2.2+.

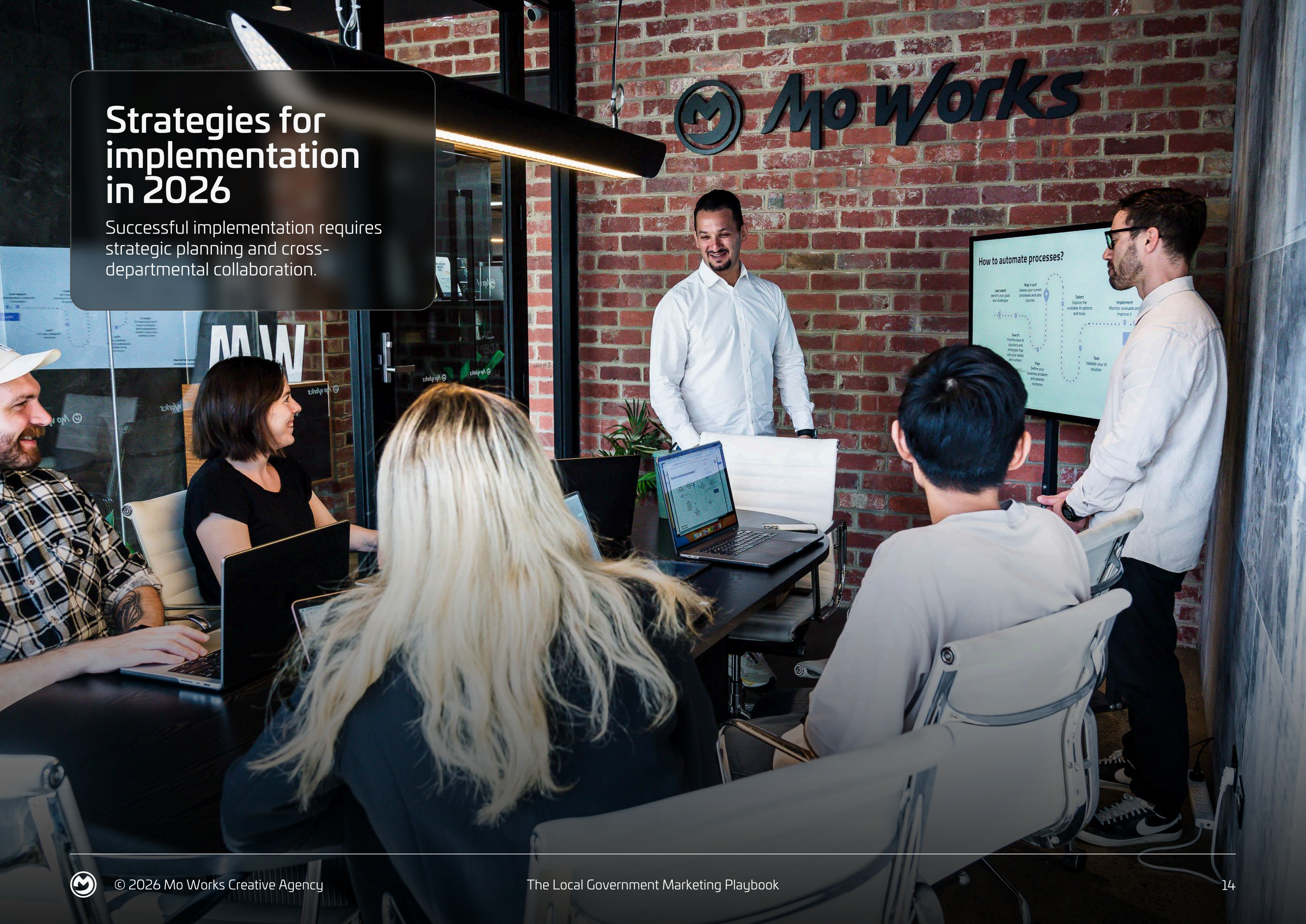
Social ROLLOUT in FIGMA (By Mo Works):

A structured setup in Figma and FigJam enables seamless collaboration and communication between teams.



Strategies for implementation in 2026

Successful implementation requires strategic planning and cross-departmental collaboration.



1 Empowering Excellence Across Departments

Start with a shared vision to ensure every team is aligned and equipped for future-ready marketing.

- Set the foundation: Develop an overarching vision and marketing strategy for 2026.
- Align initiatives: Ensure all digital and communication efforts support council-wide goals.
- Create a scalable roadmap: Outline phased implementation for new tools, AI adoption, and channel upgrades.
- Support internal capability: Provide templates, governance frameworks and cross-department toolkits.
- Celebrate internal champions: Empower staff as brand ambassadors and highlight employee-generated content to build trust.

Framework for Success: Provide the basis of a Communication Framework, Destination Marketing Plan and Initiative Marketing Plan for each department and project.



2 Persona Development and Customer Journey Mapping

Know your audiences deeply and design service pathways that meet their expectations.

- Detailed personas: Build updated personas for residents, businesses, visitors and culturally diverse communities.
- Map 2026 journeys: Identify digital touchpoints, pain points and accessibility needs across services.
- Use insights to guide briefs: Equip teams to respond faster with data-informed, resident-first communication.

Know your customers, own the journey.



3 Content Marketing Strategy

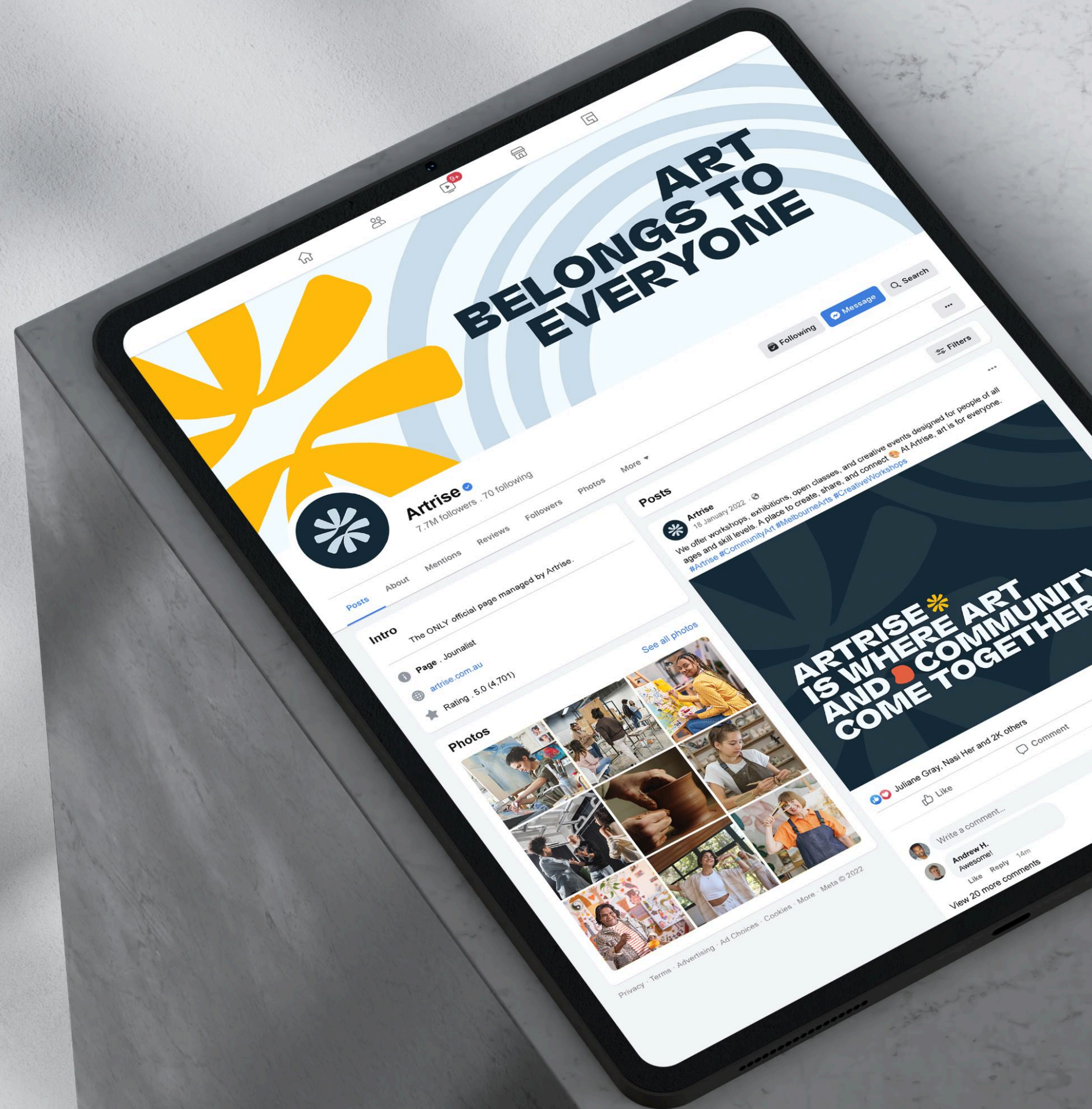
- Optimise content for search and integrate AI-powered summaries or translations.
- Plan a content calendar that amplifies UGC and repurposes materials for broader reach.
- Ensure content works seamlessly on mobile and meets accessibility standards.

Engaging stories that reflect and inspire our diverse community.

4 Channel-Specific Marketing Plans

Tailor strategies for each platform to maximise inclusivity:

- Engage multicultural communities via Weibo, Little Red Book, WhatsApp, community radio and translated assets.
- Ensure campaigns reflect the richness of your local community.
- Prioritise channels that support on-the-go updates, consultations and service alerts.



5 Invest in Team Training and Development

- **AI literacy:** Train staff to use AI responsibly for content creation, accessibility, and resident-service support.
- **Data skills:** Equip teams to interpret dashboards, sentiment trends and campaign metrics.
- **Digital marketing training:** Strengthen skills in short-form video, social media engagement and content planning.
- **Support tools:** Provide templates, tone-of-voice guides, accessibility checklists and workflow systems.



Boost success with partnerships

Strategic partnerships amplify council efforts, providing agility, scalability, and innovation. Keep making moves faster by onboarding a 360° creative partner that can help scale, build directions, strategies and customer journeys and uplift the creative and digital game.



Collaborate with 360° creative agencies to develop integrated campaigns that reflect council objectives. Key benefits include:

Increased Agility

Agencies experienced in agile marketing frameworks enable governments to pivot quickly, adapt strategies, and respond to emerging trends or feedback without disrupting ongoing initiatives.

Scalability

By leveraging modular approaches and flexible staffing models, agencies can scale efforts efficiently, whether for small community projects or large-scale campaigns.

Up-to-date knowledge

Agencies stay current with the latest marketing trends, technologies, and best practices across multiple industries, bringing fresh perspectives and innovative strategies.

Enhanced ROI

Strategic partnerships rooted in data-driven decisions can optimise budgets and maximise returns. For instance, collaborations with performance marketing agencies have demonstrated exponential improvements in ROI for similar organisations.

Faster implementation

Agencies can often begin work immediately after contract signing, whereas building an in-house team takes time for hiring and training.

Benchmark Achievement

Agencies bring industry insights and tools to set realistic KPIs, track progress, and deliver measurable outcomes aligned with council objectives.

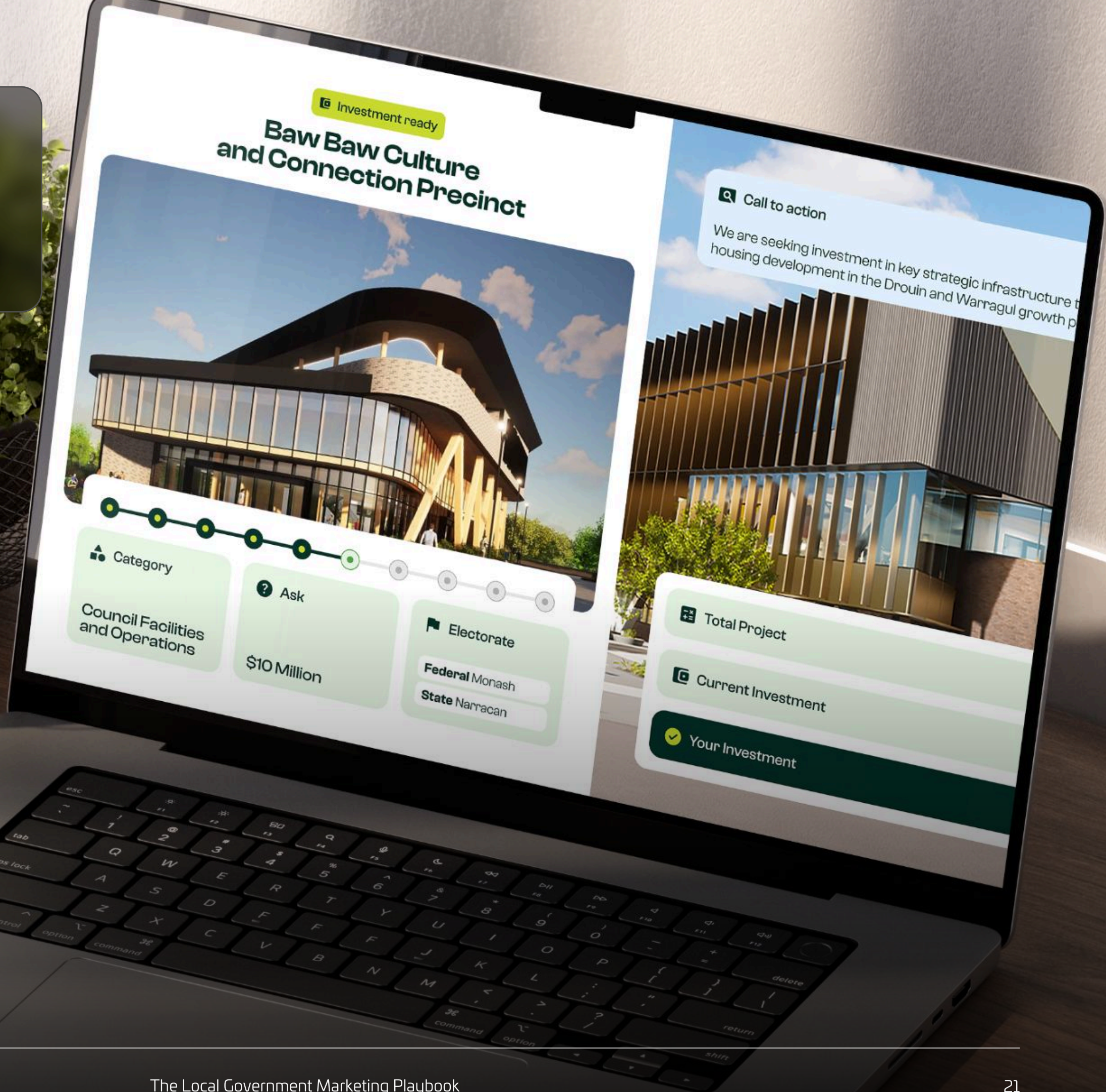
Accountability and measurement

Good agencies often commit to specific KPIs or ROI goals, providing advanced measurement and analytics capabilities to justify marketing investments.

By fostering a collaborative relationship with the right creative agency, local governments can amplify their impact while staying adaptable in an ever-changing landscape.

Roadmap for success in 2026

A structured action plan ensures long-term impact and accountability.



Roadmap for Council Success

Asset and Audit

Start by assessing your current digital presence and communications assets. A thorough audit helps you identify gaps, prioritise initiatives, and ensure resources are focused on the areas that will make the biggest impact.

Customer Experience (CX)

Map your residents' journeys and develop clear personas. Understanding how different community groups interact with your services allows you to simplify processes, reduce friction, and deliver communications that resonate.

Leverage Technology

Use AI and other smart tools to analyse data, personalise interactions, and predict community needs. Technology should support efficiency while enhancing the quality and accessibility of your communications.

Set Clear Priorities

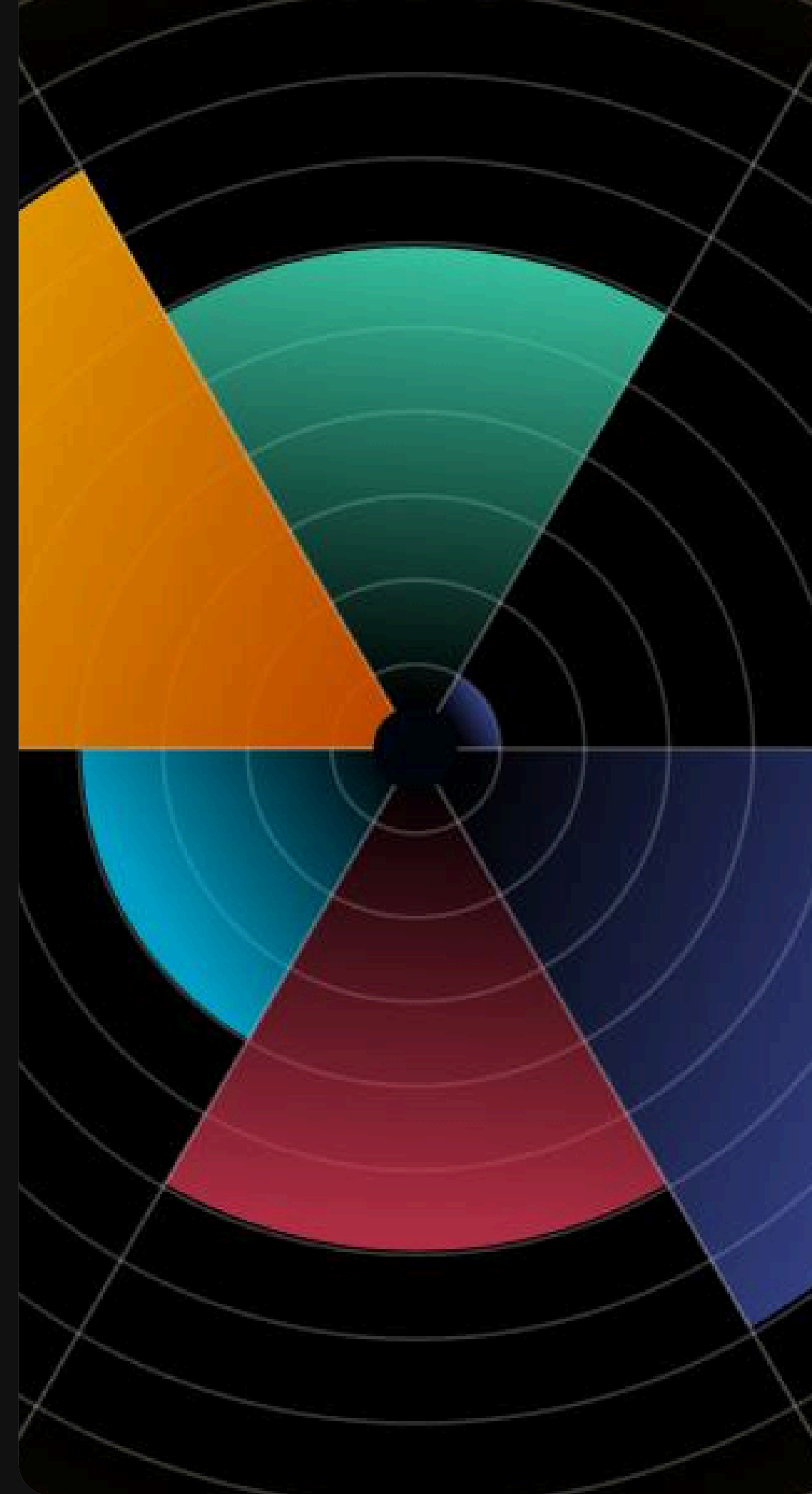
Focus your efforts on inclusivity, sustainability, and meaningful community engagement. Defining clear priorities ensures every campaign, message, and initiative aligns with your council's values and strategic goals.

Content Plan

Develop a content strategy centred on your community. Prioritise content that is discoverable, relevant, and useful, while creating templates and workflows to maintain consistency and quality across channels.

Monitor Progress

Measure success through transparent KPIs and regular reporting. Tracking outcomes, from engagement metrics to resident satisfaction, allows you to refine strategies, build trust, and demonstrate real impact.



Conclusion

Embracing the future: next steps for councils

Adopting these strategies and tools positions councils at the forefront of local government marketing. But where should you begin? This 7-step action plan is a good place to start.

- 1 Audit your current communications and digital ecosystem
- 2 Prioritise high-impact improvements
- 3 Strengthen internal capability
- 4 Build a smarter content framework
- 5 Improve data foundations
- 6 Explore new communication channels
- 7 Start small, measure, and scale

If you need guidance implementing any of these steps, or want expert support along the way, the Mo Works team is here to help.



Who we are

At Mo Works, we work with you



Brand & Communication Strategy

Crafting branding strategies and frameworks to elevate your brand.



Creative & Experience Design

Creating engaging content & memorable user experiences.



Web & App Development

Building custom web & app solutions for success.



Demand & Lead Generation

Empowering sales teams & filling pipelines with qualified leads.



Marketing, Creative & Tech Management

Integrating creative team for flexible marketing and development support.

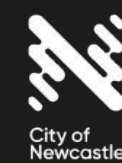


Technology & Digital Transformation

Automating processes & optimising tech stack for growth.



CITY OF SYDNEY



UPPAREL

SiteTech



COOKERS



JOHN HOLLAND



WISE Employment



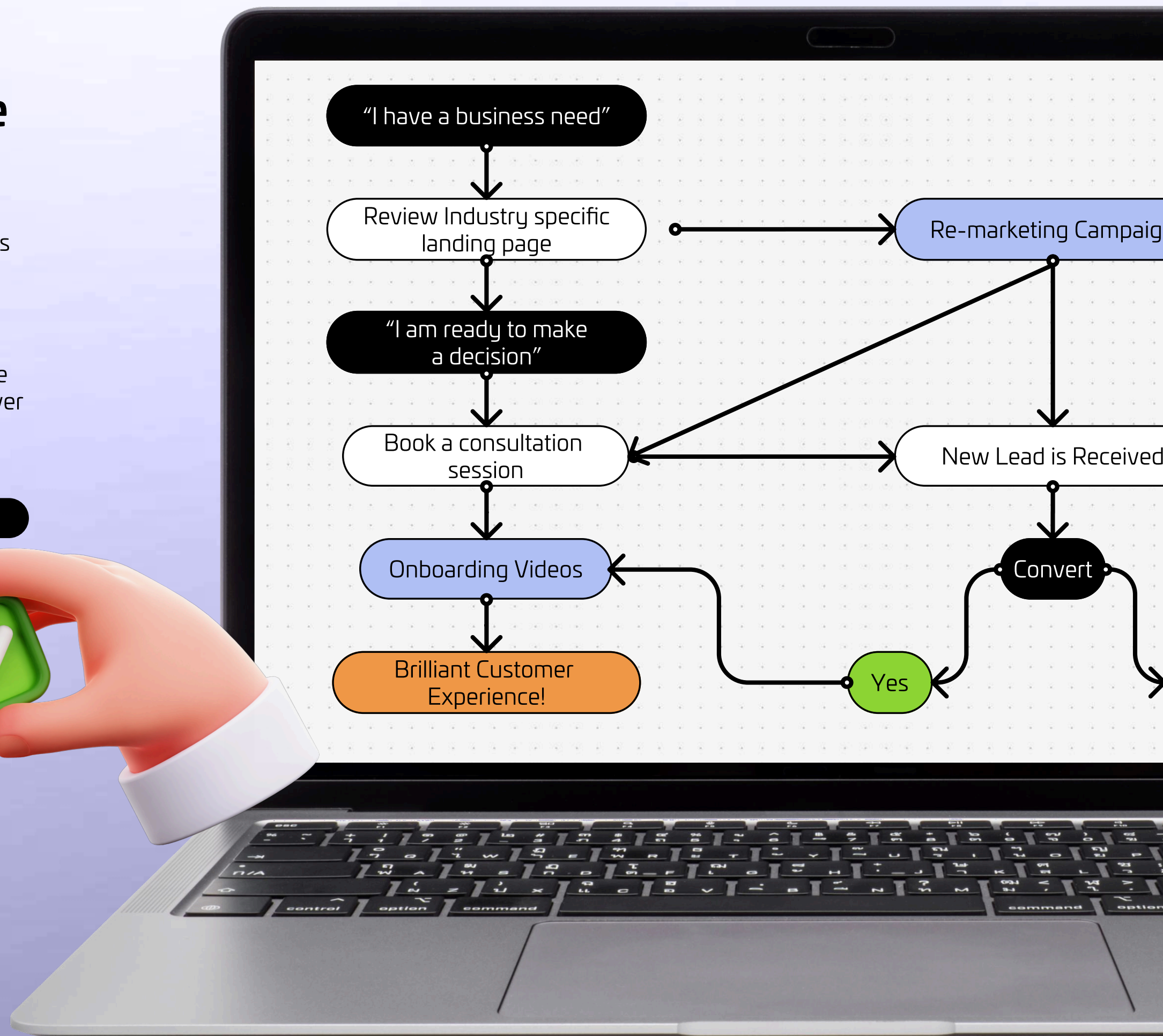
Complimentary

Book your 30-minute discovery session

Gain actionable insights into your citizen services and drive measurable improvements with a complimentary 30-minute discovery session.

This session is a practical first step for local government teams looking to identify service gaps, simplify citizen interactions, and uncover clear opportunities to modernise, streamline, and enhance engagement.

Book Now





Supercharge your
business
with Australia's
leading creative
consultancy.

Get in touch with us

121 Arden St, North Melbourne, VIC
3051, Australia

+61 3 9642 7156
work@moworks.com.au

© 2026 Mo Works Creative Agency

