



P.O. Box 1749  
Halifax, Nova Scotia  
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**Item No. 15.4.1**  
**Halifax Regional Council**  
**April 14, 2026**

**TO:** Mayor Fillmore and Members of Halifax Regional Council  
**FROM:** Councillor Tony Mancini, Chair, Special Events Advisory Committee  
**DATE:** April 8, 2026  
**SUBJECT:** **Halifax Regional Event Strategy Report**

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**ORIGIN**

April 8, 2025 meeting of the Special Events Advisory Committee, Item 6.1.

**RECOMMENDATION**

That the Special Events Advisory Committee recommends Halifax Regional Council:

1. Endorse the Halifax Regional Event Strategy 2035, as outlined in Attachment 1 of the staff report dated February 24, 2026.
2. Direct the Chief Administrative Officer to work in partnership with Discover Halifax and sector partners to implement the Halifax Regional Event Strategy 2035 through Annual Action Plans, using existing resources.
3. Direct the Chief Administrative Officer to align various municipal event-related policies, processes, and governance structures, where appropriate, with the Halifax Regional Event Strategy 2035.
4. Direct the Chief Administrative Officer to work with Discover Halifax to prepare and return to Council with:
  - a. staff presentation, proposed detailed policy, program, governance, and measurement instruments, as required, to support implementation of the Halifax Regional Event Strategy 2035; and
  - b. proposed amendments to Administrative Order 2014-020-GOV (Marketing Levy Special Event Reserve Grants) to align, or replace, current event-funding programs so they are governed by, and consistent with, the Halifax Regional Event Strategy 2035.

## **BACKGROUND**

The Special Events Advisory Committee received a staff recommendation report dated February 24, 2026 to endorse the 2025 Halifax Regional Event Strategy, which focuses on strengthening the system that enables events rather than prescribing specific events.

For further information refer to the attached staff report dated February 24, 2026.

## **DISCUSSION**

The Special Events Advisory Committee considered the staff report dated February 24, 2026 and approved the recommendation to Halifax Regional Council as outlined in this report.

## **FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

Financial implications are outlined in the attached staff report dated February 24, 2026.

## **RISK CONSIDERATION**

Risk consideration is outlined in the attached staff report dated February 24, 2026.

## **COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT**

The Special Events Advisory Committee is comprised of six citizen members and three Councillors. The agenda, reports and minutes of the Committee are posted on Halifax.ca.

For further information on Community Engagement refer to the attached staff report dated February 24, 2026.

## **ENVIRONMENTAL IMPLICATIONS**

Environmental implications are outlined in the staff report dated February 24, 2026.

## **ALTERNATIVES**

Alternatives are outlined in the attached staff report dated February 24, 2026.

## **LEGISLATIVE AUTHORITY**

Legislative Authority is outlined in the attached staff report dated February 24, 2026.

## **ATTACHMENTS**

Attachment 1 – Staff recommendation report dated February 24, 2026.





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**Item No. 6.1**  
**Special Events Advisory Committee**  
**April 8, 2026**

**TO:** Chair and Members of the Special Events Advisory Committee

**FROM:** Jacqueline Hamilton, Commissioner of Operations

**DATE:** February 24, 2026

**SUBJECT:** Halifax Regional Event Strategy

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**ORIGIN**

October 1, 2024, Regional Council motion 15.3.1

MOVED by Councillor Kent, seconded by Councillor Lovelace THAT Halifax Regional Council request the Chief Administrative Officer work with Discover Halifax to develop a major event strategy and a policy framework.

**EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

Events are a key driver of Halifax's cultural vitality, community connection, and visitor economy. While the event sector has grown in scale and complexity, municipal and regional systems have not evolved at the same pace. Previous Council direction, industry feedback, and national assessments have consistently identified the need for clearer roles, better coordination, and a shared framework to support events.

The Halifax Regional Event Strategy 2035 provides that framework. Developed jointly by HRM, Discover Halifax, Events Nova Scotia, and Events East in 2025, and informed by extensive sector and public engagement, the Strategy focuses on strengthening the system that enables events rather than prescribing specific events.

The Strategy is built on three pillars:

- **Authenticity:** Supporting events rooted in Halifax's communities and culture.
- **Assets:** Improving enabling conditions such as infrastructure readiness, permitting, and workforce capacity.
- **Alignment:** Clarifying roles and strengthening collaboration across partners.

Implementation is supported through Annual Action Plans, updated governance structures, and a new measurement and impact framework. The Strategy aligns with the Halifax Regional Integrated Tourism Master Plan 2030 and complements the Major Event & Growth Policy Framework.

There are no financial implications at this time. Approval establishes a coordinated, predictable approach to event development that strengthens cultural, community, and economic outcomes for Halifax.

## **RECOMMENDATIONS**

It is recommended that the Special Events Advisory Committee recommend that Halifax Regional Council:

1. Endorse the Halifax Regional Event Strategy 2035, as outlined in Attachment 1 of this report;
2. Direct the Chief Administrative Officer to work in partnership with Discover Halifax and sector partners to implement the Halifax Regional Event Strategy 2035 through Annual Action Plans, using existing resources;
3. Direct the Chief Administrative Officer to align various municipal event-related policies, processes, and governance structures, where appropriate, with the Halifax Regional Event Strategy 2035
4. Direct the Chief Administrative Officer to work with Discover Halifax to prepare and return to Council with:
  - a. proposed detailed policy, program, governance, and measurement instruments, as required, to support implementation of the Halifax Regional Event Strategy 2035; and
  - b. proposed amendments to Administrative Order 2014-020-GOV (Marketing Levy Special Event Reserve Grants) to align, or replace, current event-funding programs so they are governed by, and consistent with, the Halifax Regional Event Strategy 2035.

## **BACKGROUND**

Events have long played a role in Halifax's economic, cultural, and community life, and the municipality has supported event growth through various funding, policy, and service mechanisms for more than two decades. Over this period, Regional Council has considered several reports identifying the increasing scale, complexity, and economic importance of events, along with the need for clearer roles, coordinated leadership, and improved municipal processes.

The need for a Regional Event Strategy is emerging as Halifax's event landscape grows in scale, ambition, and complexity. Organizers are operating in an increasingly challenging environment, managing higher costs, tighter resources, and rising expectations from both visitors and residents. At the same time, rapid population growth and rising visitation are increasing demand for events that strengthen community connection, support local culture, and enhance the overall visitor experience. Partners across the sector are being asked to collaborate in ways that exceed what existing policies and processes are designed to support. Without a shared framework, roles can be difficult to navigate, priorities may be interpreted differently, and opportunities are not always pursued consistently. The Strategy provides the coordinated approach needed to align mandates, guide development, and support the long-term health and growth of Halifax's event ecosystem.

In 2016, the Community Planning and Economic Development Standing Committee requested clarification of HRM's role in tourism, festivals, and special events. Industry correspondence in 2017 further emphasized the need for stronger coordination among sector partners. In 2019, the Canadian Sport Tourism Alliance STAT PRO assessment identified gaps in governance, bid development, risk management, and evaluation, and recommended the creation of a regional event strategy and clearer definitions of partner roles across the event ecosystem.

The Integrated Tourism Master Plan (2019) reinforced this direction by calling for the creation of a festivals and events office to provide backbone leadership for event attraction and development. In response, a new service agreement between HRM and Discover Halifax in late 2023 formalized the establishment of the Festivals & Events Department within Discover Halifax to strengthen event development capacity and regional coordination.

Legislative changes also expanded HRM's ability to support events. In 2022, the Province of Nova Scotia amended the Municipal Government Act and Halifax Regional Municipality Charter to increase the maximum marketing levy. Under provincial legislation, marketing levy revenues may only be used for tourism promotion; within this mandate, a portion of the levy is allocated to event-related initiatives through Administrative Order 2014-020-GOV Respecting Marketing Levy Special Event Reserve Grants. Combined with growth in visitation and the extension of short term rentals being added into the marketing levy, this has increased the resources available for event attraction and development.

In July 2025, Regional Council adopted the [Halifax Regional Integrated Tourism Master Plan 2030](#), which identifies several priorities related to event development: develop a Regional Events Strategy, develop a large-scale outdoor event space, develop a nationally recognized marquee event, and pursue a targeted approach for modernization of sport venues to support hosting competitive events. These priorities reinforced existing recommendations for a coordinated municipal and regional approach to event attraction, development, and hosting.

To advance this work, development of the Halifax Regional Event Strategy began in February 2025 as a joint initiative of HRM, Discover Halifax, Events Nova Scotia, and Events East. A project committee with representatives from each organization was established to guide the process, supported by an advisory committee with representation from major events, signature festivals, tourism operators, hotels, business improvement districts, community organizations, and cultural and sport partners.

The Strategy followed a multi-phase development process. Phase 1 focused on insight, community engagement and discovery through document review, 1:1 meetings, workshops, and focus groups with over 150 citizens connected to the industry in both urban and rural areas. Phase 2 centred on validating emerging themes and developing the initial strategic framework and included both targeted and public surveys. Phase 3 involved refining the draft Strategy and confirming direction with partners. A [What We Heard report](#) was presented to the Special Events Advisory Committee on June 11, 2025. Engagement occurred from April through July 2025, drafting took place between August and September, and a near-final version was completed in November 2025.

The Halifax Regional Event Strategy 2035 responds to longstanding recommendations and emerging needs by providing a coordinated, region-wide approach to attracting, developing, supporting, and evaluating events. It establishes a long-term framework to guide the role of events in Halifax's economic, cultural, and community development and clarifies the shared responsibilities of the municipality and its partners in advancing these goals.

Rooted in conversations with over 150 organizations and individuals, informed by best practices from around the world, and anchored in Halifax's strengths, this is a strategy for the whole industry. It's backed by a living Action Plan that keeps our approach responsive, coordinated, and focused on what matters most. From an HRM standpoint this means this strategy speaks to everything we support, from small community gatherings to Major event bids.

## **DISCUSSION**

### **Why Events Matter in Halifax**

Events are a defining feature of life in Halifax. They animate public spaces, strengthen cultural expression, support reconciliation and inclusion, and create opportunities for residents to gather, celebrate, and connect. They contribute to pride of place, community identity, and a sense of belonging across neighbourhoods and cultures. Engagement participants consistently described events as "what makes Halifax feel like Halifax."

Events also play a central role in Halifax's visitor economy. They attract new and repeat visitation, extend stays, activate during all seasons, and support local business. Visitors increasingly seek real, time-bound,

place-based experiences, particularly younger travellers seeking authenticity in contrast to an algorithmic online world. Events deliver these experiences in ways that deepen connection to place and differentiate Halifax from competitor destinations.

Events also contribute to Halifax's national and international visibility. High-profile cultural and sport events help build Halifax's reputation, attract investor attention, strengthen business confidence, and generate export opportunities for local creators and enterprises. Events such as SailGP bring visibility and notoriety to Halifax, raising our profile and positioning the region competitively in both economic development and tourism contexts.

In this way, events sit at the intersection of tourism, culture, community development, and economic growth, one of the few areas where municipal support has the potential to produce broad and overlapping benefits. The Halifax Regional Event Strategy builds on this understanding by seeking to strengthen the system that enables events of all sizes and types to thrive.

### **The Core Issue: A Growing Event Landscape Without a Coordinated Support System**

While Halifax's event ecosystem has expanded in scale, diversity, and ambition, the systems that support it have not evolved at the same pace. Producers, venues, partners, and municipal teams all described a landscape where strong outcomes are achieved despite systemic gaps, not because of them.

These challenges place pressure on organizers, increase the administrative and operational burden on HRM, and limit the region's ability to pursue opportunities strategically.

The central challenge the Strategy addresses is therefore not lack of activity, but the absence of a shared system for planning, coordinating, enabling, and evaluating events. The Strategy responds by establishing a clearer, more predictable foundation that allows partners to work together with greater consistency and purpose.

### **Pressures Affecting Events in Halifax**

Engagement, research, and national trends point to a set of pressures that are shaping the sector and increasing risk for events of all sizes. Together, these pressures highlight why a coordinated system is needed to sustain and grow Halifax's event ecosystem. These elements are all broken down in more detail within Attachment 1 and include:

- *Rising costs and financial fragility*
- *Declining volunteer capacity and workforce challenges*
- *Infrastructure and venue limitations*
- *Pressure on the visitor economy and demand related impacts*
- *Complexity of municipal processes*
- *Fragmented governance and unclear roles*

### **Opportunities for Halifax**

Despite these pressures, Halifax is positioned for meaningful opportunity. Global tourism trends, regional economic priorities, and local sector strengths show that events are a growing and important contributor to Halifax's cultural vibrancy, visitor economy, and overall quality of place. A coordinated approach allows Halifax to convert these opportunities into sustained benefit.

As an example, the Halifax Convention Centre and Scotiabank Centre have together generated over \$500 million in economic impact since 2018, making Halifax a competitive destination for national and international conferences and events.

*Strong alignment with visitor expectations and travel behaviour*

Tourism markets—especially younger travellers—are increasingly motivated by time-bound, authentic cultural experiences. Visitors want moments that feel real and connected to place. Events deliver this distinctively well, serving as:

- Primary motivators for event-led tourism
- Trip conversion tools that influence booking decisions
- Experience enhancers that make the destination feel vibrant and memorable

This aligns directly with the Integrated Tourism Master Plan's focus on building a “vibrant and alive-365” destination with meaningful, place-based experiences.

*A creative and cultural sector with significant untapped potential*

Halifax's arts, culture, music, and sport communities form a strong foundation for distinctive programming. Research shows that culturally vibrant cities experience stronger talent attraction and retention, more robust innovation ecosystems, and improved foreign direct investment outcomes. The Inclusive Economic Strategy identifies culture and creativity as essential components of economic competitiveness; events are one of the most visible engines of this vibrancy. With clearer support systems, these strengths can be amplified.

*Tourism momentum that benefits from coordinated action*

Halifax's expanding visitor economy presents an opportunity to channel growth into cultural and sport programming, diversify visitation across seasons, and build international profile. Events support shoulder-season activation, neighbourhood economic activity, repeat visitation, and reputation-building. A coordinated strategy ensures these benefits accumulate rather than disperse.

An example of success in the shoulder season would be the Canadian National Olympic Curling Qualifiers that recently took place downtown Halifax posting a STEAM assessment score of 40 million in economic impact over 10 days in November. Another example is our annual Signature Calendar of events that include Hal-Con, SEDMHA, Cheer Expo and Halifax Comedy Fest. These events earn over 25 million combined in economic value annually and bring thousands of tourists into our region during the Fall/Winter periods. In 2026 it is also predicted that the University Men's National Hockey Championships (U CUP) will generate \$7 million in economic impact (March event).

*Sector readiness and appetite for shared direction*

Event producers, cultural organizations, tourism partners, and community groups expressed strong interest in long-term planning, predictable processes, and shared structures for collaboration. The current limitation is not lack of ideas or ambition—it is the absence of a unified system through which partners can act collectively.

*Alignment with ITMP 2030 and the Inclusive Economic Strategy*

Events directly support priority directions across both strategies, including cultural vibrancy, visitation growth, talent attraction, and strengthened public experience. The Strategy advances key ITMP 2030 event-related priorities such as:

- development of a Regional Events Strategy
- advancement of a large-scale outdoor event space
- strengthening year-round activation through marquee events
- improving readiness of public spaces and venues

These priorities reinforce Halifax's long-term competitive positioning as a vibrant, welcoming, and globally visible destination.

## What the Strategy Does

Rather than prescribing specific events or setting hosting targets, the Strategy builds the system that allows events to succeed. It does this through three strategic pillars designed to strengthen cultural expression, improve enabling conditions, and create unified planning and decision-making structures.

The Strategy is designed to strengthen both the cultural and economic value of events by establishing the conditions under which high-impact programming can attract visitors, increase spending, and elevate Halifax's market position.

**Authenticity** - Supporting events rooted in Halifax's communities and culture.

**Assets** - Improving enabling conditions such as infrastructure readiness, permitting, and workforce capacity

**Alignment** - Clarifying roles and strengthening collaboration across partners

These pillars (pg. 13 of the strategy) work together to establish a more coordinated, resilient, and strategically aligned event ecosystem that supports both day-to-day delivery and long-term ambition.

## A Modernized Governance and Implementation Model

*Proposed amendments to Administrative Order 2014-020-GOV, Scoring Instruments & New Proposed Policy Framework*

Aspects of the Strategy itself, as well as the identified delivery mechanisms will require changes to some of the existing structures and policies current in place to support event delivery. For example, the following strategic priorities will likely require municipal policy or administrative changes to implement:

- Transform event funding programs
- Strengthen the backbone and governance
- Ensure safe and supportive delivery
- Develop and apply an impact framework
- Enact and evolve a Major Events and Growth Policy Framework

The Strategy introduces governance and implementation considerations and directions designed to lead to clear oversight, coordinated planning, and predictable pathways for decision-making. This approach speaks to the structures and policies required to translate long-term direction into steady, incremental progress while maintaining accountability to Regional Council, HRM administration, and sector partners.

For example, AO 2014-020-GOV has not been reviewed since the creation of the new Events & Attraction office at Discover Halifax. Staff from the municipality and Discover Halifax have reviewed the AO and consider that current scoring and funding models are outdated and a policy update is recommended. There are key adjustments that should be made to modernize our ability to fund events. For example, the current system relies on categories such as emerging, distinguished or signature events. If the Events Strategy is approved, staff will work with the Strategy project team to propose amendments to the AO to better connect funding decisions to the Events Strategy and new policy framework.

### *Review Scoring Methods and Measurement Instruments*

The Strategy and Event framework consultation pointed to a need for staff to review all current scoring methods and measurement instruments. Working alongside DH, staff will also do a global scan for scoring methods that better reflect social and marketing impacts of events. Our current scoring model is weighted heavily on hotel nights vs economic and social impact combined. Although hotel nights will always be a key factor in determining the economic impact of Marketing Levy Special Event Reserve (MLSER) events, there are many factors that need to be considered to realize the activation of Assets, Authenticity and Alignment requirements of the Strategy.

Other implementation actions will be brought forward to Special Events Advisory Committee and Regional Council, as required.

### *Annual Action Plans*

Discover Halifax will work alongside HRM to create Annual Action Plans to operationalize the Strategy by translating high-level direction into a clear set of annual priorities. These annual priorities ensure that implementation advances in manageable phases, aligns with budgeting cycles, and remains responsive to new opportunities or emerging pressures. This phased approach allows the system to strengthen over time without requiring immediate large-scale change.

Plans will be developed collaboratively by HRM, Discover Halifax, and sector partners. Drafts will be shared with the Events Industry Advisory Group for sector insight and with the Special Events Advisory Committee for review and feedback, ensuring continued alignment with HRM's direction. Once finalized, the Action Plan becomes the shared reference point for coordinated implementation across partners.

Discover Halifax will provide coordinating support for the development of the Annual Action Plan, with this work undertaken within existing operational resources.

The strategy introduces the following new or revised groups:

### *Events Industry Advisory Group (EIAG)*

The EIAG provides a structured venue for ongoing dialogue with the event sector as a whole. This would be a new mechanism to connect the industry to staff. Allowing experts in Sport, Music, Film, etc to have a seat at the table outside of the Special Events Advisory Committee format. A collaborative, independently chaired forum that provides public partners with industry insight, supports alignment between public processes and industry standards, and ensures operational realities and emerging needs are heard. Discover Halifax will provide secretariat support.

### *Annual Events Industry Forum*

The annual Forum convenes a broader cross-section of the sector to review progress, gather feedback, and build cohesion around shared priorities.

### *Safety Advisory Forum for Events (SAFE)*

SAFE evolves the role of the current Special Events Task Force by placing a stronger emphasis on coordinated problem-solving and early engagement. While regulatory responsibilities remain essential, the intent is to complement them with a more facilitative approach that helps identify solutions sooner and supports organizers in navigating operational requirements. Any changes required to *Administrative Order 2014-010-ADM Respecting Special Events Task Force Process for Events, Parades & Street Closures*, will be brought forward to Regional Council for approval.

### *Five-Year Review Cycle*

A formal review after five years ensures that the Strategy evolves with changes in the sector, community expectations, and regional priorities.

Ongoing leadership and stewardship of the Strategy will be provided by Discover Halifax, working in close partnership with HRM and sector stakeholders. In this role, Discover Halifax will support coordination, convening, monitoring of progress, and ongoing engagement to ensure the Strategy remains active, responsive, and grounded in shared regional priorities.

## **What This Strategy Enables**

The value of the Strategy lies in creating the conditions under which Halifax can act more deliberately, consistently, and confidently over the next decade. With this Strategy in place, HRM and partners will be better positioned to:

- Attract and support major cultural and sport events
- Develop a modernized impact framework

- Review and strengthen municipal funding and support programs
- Build sustained relationships with communities and underrepresented cultural groups
- Coordinate efforts across government, tourism, culture, and the event sector

The Strategy establishes the foundation for an impact framework that will clarify these outcomes and introduce a shared approach to evaluating progress over time. Indicators and baselines will be developed through the Annual Action Plan process and refined through the five-year review, ensuring that future decision-making is supported by consistent evidence and that partners share a clear understanding of whether Halifax's event ecosystem is becoming more supportive, inclusive, resilient, and economically competitive.

### Alignment with Council Priorities

- **EP-04 - Economic Participation:** Events generate local economic activity and business opportunities.
- **EP-05 - Attract, Retain & Grow Talent:** Major and cultural events enhance Halifax's profile and attract visitors, talent, and investment.
- **SC-04 - Social Connection:** Events provide shared community spaces and strengthen social cohesion.
- **SC-05 - Equitable Access:** Events prioritize inclusion, accessibility, and representation across communities.
- **RA-06 - Partnerships:** Events are delivered through collaborative partnerships with municipal, provincial, and community stakeholders.

This alignment is important because it demonstrates how strategic investment in events not only strengthens Halifax's economy and cultural life but also delivers measurable social and community benefits, reinforcing Council's goals for inclusive growth, livable communities, and responsible administration.

### What Success Looks Like by 2035

The Regional Event Strategy will establish a coordinated, predictable event system for Halifax, replacing fragmented processes with clear partner roles, streamlined permitting, and transparent, criteria-based funding. A shared regional event portfolio will guide hosting decisions, align investment, and enable proactive opportunity development, while strengthening cornerstone events, workforce capacity, volunteer engagement, and cultural inclusion. Collectively, this positions Halifax as a more competitive, confident event destination delivering sustained cultural, economic, and community benefit year over year.

### FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

There are no financial implications for the 2026–27 operating budget. However, a Special Events Advisor position will be required in 2029–30, with an estimated compensation cost of \$93,000. This role will ensure the Municipality's event strategy is delivered with accountability and continuity, while also supporting the development of new private-sector revenue streams. Investing in this dedicated resource will provide long-term economic, cultural, and reputational benefits for the Municipality and its residents.

### RISK CONSIDERATION

The recommendations and actions outlined in the report are intended to mitigate risk and ensure the Municipality is creating a strategy to guide consistent decision-making and align municipal participation with public priorities.

## **COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT**

Stakeholder engagement for the Halifax Regional Event Strategy was conducted by the project's consulting team between April and September 2025, with support from the project team and guidance from a dedicated advisory committee. More than 150 participants contributed through interviews, workshops, and focus groups involving event organizers, cultural and sport partners, tourism and business representatives, and government stakeholders. In addition, a public survey of HRM residents was undertaken to validate key directions and understand community expectations. This engagement informed the Strategy's priorities and implementation approach. A more in depth breakdown of the community engagement can also be found in Appendix B of Attachment 1.

## **ENVIRONMENTAL IMPLICATIONS**

No environmental implications were identified.

## **ALTERNATIVE**

1. Special Events Advisory Committee could choose to recommend that Regional Council decline the endorsement of the Event strategy. If Council does not approve the Strategy existing challenges related to fragmented programs, the absence of a shared system for planning, coordinating, enabling, and evaluating events would remain. Also, as this strategy is aligned with sector endorsement, it could create a perception of HRM as not being a supportive partner within the event sector, if declined.
2. Special Events Advisory Committee could choose to recommend that Regional Council decline the proposed Strategy and ask staff to rework the proposed Strategy and return to SEAC and Council with an amended Strategy. If Council refers the matter for further consideration, existing challenges related to fragmented programs, the absence of a shared system for planning, coordinating, enabling, and evaluating events would remain in effect until a new strategy is approved. Revising the strategy would require increased expenses for additional work with consultants and labour from the project team.

## **LEGISLATIVE AUTHORITY**

***ADMINISTRATIVE ORDER NUMBER 2014-020-GOV Respecting Marketing Levy Special Event Reserve Grants***

### ***Schedule 1 Special Events Advisory Committee Terms of Reference***

Section 4.1 Advise Regional Council on all matters related to the allocation of the MLSER;

Section 4.2 Continue to review eligibility criteria, priorities, policy and procedures for assistance under the respective programs and services managed under the auspices of the Marketing Levy Special Events Reserve Administrative Order 2014-020-GOV;

***Halifax Regional Municipality Charter, S.N.S. 2008, c. 39:***

Purposes of Municipality

7A The purposes of the Municipality are to

- (a) provide good government;
- (b) provide services, facilities and other things that, in the opinion of the Council, are necessary or desirable for all or part of the Municipality; and

(c) develop and maintain safe and viable communities.

29A(2) The Council may by by-law impose a marketing levy upon a person who, for a daily charge, fee or remuneration purchases accommodation in the Municipality.

(5) The marketing levy collected pursuant to this Section may be only used by the Council to promote tourism.

(6) Without restricting the generality of subsection (5) and notwithstanding subsection 71(2) or any other enactment, the Council may pay such portion of the marketing levy collected by way of a grant, as determined by the Council, to any organization formed to promote tourism, whether such organization is non-profit or otherwise.

**Municipal expenditures**

79A (1) Subject to subsections (2) to (4), the Municipality may only spend money for municipal purposes if

- (a) the expenditure is included in the Municipality's operating budget or capital budget or is otherwise authorized by the Municipality;
- (b) the expenditure is in respect of an emergency under the Emergency Management Act; or \
- (c) the expenditure is legally required to be paid.

**ATTACHMENT**

Attachment - Gathering Place: Halifax Regional Event Strategy 2035

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Report Prepared by: Billy Comer, Manager, Events, 902.943-3810



# Gathering Place

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HALIFAX REGIONAL  
EVENT STRATEGY

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2035

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SUM

# Land Acknowledgement

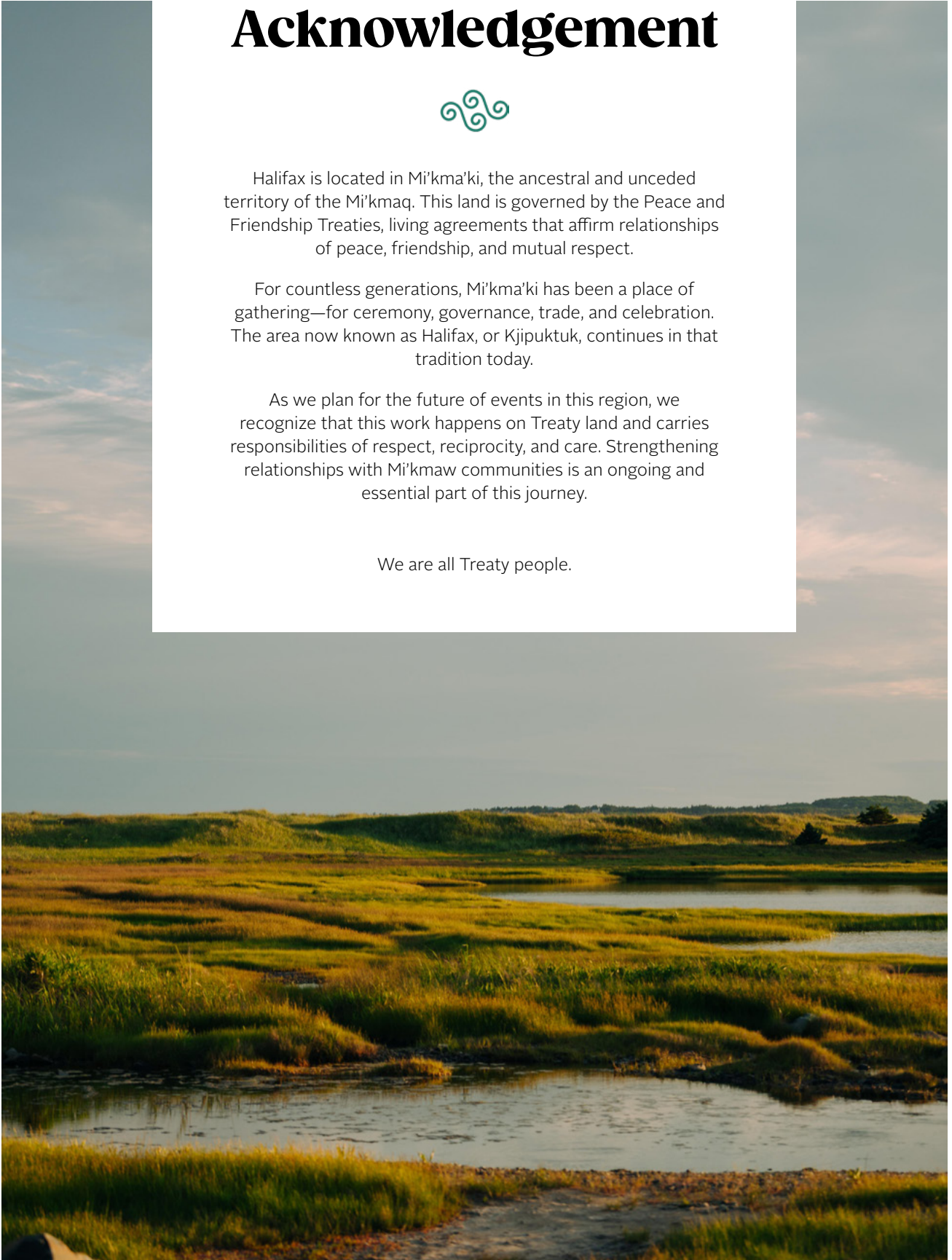


Halifax is located in Mi'kma'ki, the ancestral and unceded territory of the Mi'kmaq. This land is governed by the Peace and Friendship Treaties, living agreements that affirm relationships of peace, friendship, and mutual respect.

For countless generations, Mi'kma'ki has been a place of gathering—for ceremony, governance, trade, and celebration. The area now known as Halifax, or Kjiptuk, continues in that tradition today.

As we plan for the future of events in this region, we recognize that this work happens on Treaty land and carries responsibilities of respect, reciprocity, and care. Strengthening relationships with Mi'kmaw communities is an ongoing and essential part of this journey.

We are all Treaty people.





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The process was guided by the Regional Events Strategy Advisory Committee and informed by engagement with partners, industry stakeholders, and communities across the region.

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<b>PREPARED COLLABORATIVELY BY:</b>	A project team led by Discover Halifax and the Halifax Regional Municipality, and including Events East, and Events Nova Scotia
<b>CONSULTING SUPPORT PROVIDED BY:</b>	Daylight, Purple Moon, McLean Events, and Eventyr

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## SECTION 2

# Foreword

### Looking to 2035

Halifax is a place where ocean light meets city life; where salt air and skyline, neighbourhood and nature, all come together. It's where people gather to celebrate, to compete, to create, and to share moments worth remembering.

From the summer rhythm of the Halifax Jazz Festival to the rural pride of the Halifax County Exhibition; from the roar of the North American Indigenous Games to the wonder of Nocturne's midnight streets, our events don't just entertain—they tell the story of who we are.

### A Place That Brings People Together

We've earned our reputation as a place that delivers world-class experiences, backed by iconic locations, vibrant streets, and the creativity of our people. Our calendar blends cornerstone festivals, high-profile competitions, and inspiring cultural showcases with unforgettable one-time events that draw audiences, investment, and attention from across the globe.

But the world and our city are changing. Growth, new infrastructure, and shifting social, economic, and environmental realities bring new opportunities and challenges. This is our moment to align our efforts, amplify our strengths, and ensure the benefits of events are felt in every community, in every season, across every corner of the region.

#### Our Vision:

## Canada's Favourite Gathering Place

This strategy is our shared guide to 2035—a vision for a thriving, inclusive, and sustainable events sector that strengthens Halifax's cultural life, economy, and sense of belonging. It calls on public agencies, private partners, community leaders, and residents to work together with purpose, aligning investment, talent, and creativity to deliver more than the sum of our parts—to make Halifax Canada's favourite gathering place.

### A Strategy Shaped by Many Voices

Rooted in conversations with over 150 organizations and individuals, informed by best practices from around the world, and anchored in Halifax's strengths, this is a strategy for the whole industry. It's backed by a living Action Plan that keeps our approach responsive, coordinated, and focused on what matters most.

When Halifax moves forward together, events become more than an occasion – they become part of a larger story about who we are, what we value, and the future we are building together.



## SECTION 2.1

# Halifax's Cultural Foundations

We are home to Mi'kmaw communities, whose leadership, knowledge, and enduring connection to this land remain vital today. Their language, traditions, and cultural resurgence are central to the identity of Kjiipuktuk, reminding us that this is and always has been Mi'kma'ki.

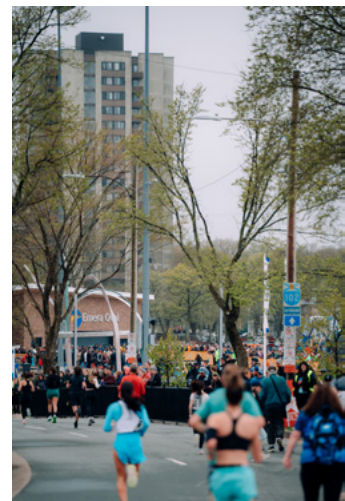
Halifax's foundation as a gathering place comes from the richness of the cultures, histories, and communities that shape it.

We are also home to African Nova Scotian communities, whose roots here stretch back more than 400 years. Their resilience in the face of displacement and systemic injustice continues to inspire, and their cultural, artistic, and entrepreneurial contributions enrich this region in countless ways.

The Acadian people, among the first Europeans to settle in North America, have built a culture born of this land: resilient, creative, and alive today. Their language, traditions, and artistic expression continue to shape our cultural identity, and today Halifax's Acadian community also welcomes francophones from across Canada and around the world, bringing new voices and energy to our region.

Our identity is further enriched by Gaelic traditions, carried forward through language, music, and cultural revival; by 2SLGBTQIA+ communities, whose vibrancy, presence, and contributions to culture and public life make Halifax one of the most welcoming and inclusive regions; and by newcomer communities, who bring global perspectives and connections that shape the region's future.

Together, these peoples are not only part of our past, they are living, evolving, and leading in the experiences we create. This strategy recognizes their contributions and commits to working in partnership to ensure the events we attract, create, and support reflect the full diversity of Halifax, year-round and across the region.



## SECTION 3

# The Importance of a Shared Strategy

Halifax's event sector is a living, breathing part of our cultural, economic, and social fabric. It's vibrant, diverse, and constantly evolving; it's shaped by passionate people, unique places, and a history of showing up for one another. But like many great stories, it has grown organically over time. Now, with our city and region changing rapidly, there's an opportunity to be more intentional—to align efforts, set shared goals, and create an event ecosystem that delivers greater benefits for everyone.

When an industry comes together around a common vision, it amplifies what's possible. Collaboration turns good ideas into great ones, builds resilience, and makes success a shared achievement.

Events are also a cornerstone of Halifax's visitor economy. They turn Halifax into a destination, creating reasons to travel, extending visitor stays, and distributing activity across seasons and communities. When visitors come for a festival or championship, they do more than attend the event—they stay in our hotels, eat in our restaurants, and explore the region. In doing so, they drive tourism demand and generate economic activity that benefits the entire region.



## What We Have to Build On

Halifax's event sector already stands out for:

- A strong volunteer base and deep community engagement.
- A compact, walkable downtown and scenic waterfront, elevating the visitor experience.
- Natural assets that lend themselves to one-of-a-kind event settings.
- A growing recognition of the responsibility and opportunity to reflect the region's cultural diversity, including Mi'kmaw, Acadian, African Nova Scotian, and francophone heritage.
- An expanding capacity to ensure events are consistently well-executed and impactful.
- Sporting and artistic strengths, particularly in ice- and water-based sports and music.
- A shared desire across the sector to work together.
- A clear understanding of the need for both infrastructure investment and sustainable growth—financially and environmentally.

## Why Alignment Matters

A shared strategy turns these strengths into a coordinated force. It provides a clear set of agreed objectives and a framework for connection and collaboration. This Regional Events Strategy makes that possible through two key industry connections:

**An Event Industry Advisory Group** that serves as a central hub for communication and coordination

**The Halifax Event Industry Forum** that brings the sector together regularly to share insights, strengthen relationships, and tackle challenges collectively

Together, they will align efforts, address barriers, and seize emerging opportunities, ensuring Halifax's event sector is energetic, inclusive, and ready for the future.

This strategy also recognizes that events do not exist in a vacuum. They face challenges such as fragile funding models and shifting political and social climates. Building resilience in this sector means creating conditions where events can withstand these pressures while continuing to deliver value to Halifax's communities, economy, and cultural life.



## Part of a Bigger Picture

Events are more than stand-alone moments. The right event portfolio can help deliver on the priorities of other regional strategies, boosting tourism, enhancing our economy, and enriching community life. That's why this strategy is intentionally aligned with:

**The Integrated Tourism Master Plan (ITMP)**, which highlights the role of events in attracting visitors and enhancing their experience.

**The Inclusive Economic Strategy (IES)**, which positions cultural and community events as engines of inclusive economic growth.

By connecting these strategies, we create a stronger foundation where culture, tourism, and economic development work together as mutually reinforcing drivers of regional growth.



## Who This Strategy Is For?

Halifax's event sector is built on partnerships. This strategy is for everyone who contributes to creating, enabling, or benefiting from events, from core producers to the communities that bring them to life. It recognizes that while each group has its own priorities, our shared success depends on alignment, collaboration, and a clear sense of purpose.

### Event Industry

At the heart of Halifax's event sector are the organizations whose primary focus is planning, funding, producing, and delivering events. This includes rights holders, producers, funders, venues, and suppliers, spanning public, private, and non-profit sectors.

#### PRIORITIES FOR THESE PARTNERS:

- Strong collaboration across the sector and a region that welcomes and supports events
- Clear objectives and transparent pathways to access support

### Associated Industries

Some partners use events to achieve broader objectives, even if they don't work directly in the events industry. Their focus is attracting visitors, growing the economy, or enhancing community appeal. These include economic development agencies, tourism and hospitality businesses, business improvement districts, and partners such as Destination Canada and the Atlantic Canada Opportunities Agency.

#### PRIORITIES FOR THESE PARTNERS:

- Clear, measurable demonstration of shared benefits
- A strong rationale for investment aligned with long-term growth and development priorities

### Supporting Organizations

These are the services and agencies that keep events safe, inclusive, and compliant, including emergency services, municipal departments, regulatory bodies, and advisory groups specializing in accessibility, sustainability, and public safety.

#### PRIORITIES FOR THESE PARTNERS:

- Compliance with public safety legislation
- Fostering an enabling, event-friendly mindset
- Balancing event needs with those of residents

### Sector Bodies

Halifax's event ecosystem is anchored by a values-based governance framework. Existing groups such as the Special Events Task Force (SETF) and Special Events Advisory Committee (SEAC) lead on operational delivery and funding governance. This strategy also establishes the Event Industry Advisory Group as a dedicated voice for the sector.

#### PRIORITIES FOR THESE PARTNERS:

- Enabling safe, high-quality event delivery, and sustaining a thriving sector
- Directing funding toward events that achieve the right outcomes for Halifax

### Residents and Communities

Halifax's residents and communities are the lifeblood of the events sector, serving as audiences, volunteers, and contributors of local culture and content. The right events portfolio offers benefits for all: jobs, vibrancy, shared experiences, and a deeper sense of place and community connection.

#### PRIORITIES FOR RESIDENTS & COMMUNITIES:

- A diverse portfolio offering something for a wide range of people
- Events spread across the region so more communities can participate and benefit
- Events fostering belonging, pride, and overall well-being

## SECTION 4

# What Success Looks Like by 2035

By 2035, Halifax is a place where events are part of our heartbeat, reflecting who we are, welcoming the world, and inspiring everyone who takes part.



**Halifax has grown into a place where our events system feels as natural and intentional as the tides.**

Events are part of Halifax's everyday life and are embraced by residents, celebrated by visitors, and brought to life by a confident, collaborative, and diverse industry.

**Across the region, the calendar is alive year-round**—a balanced, resilient mix crossing seasons, genres, and communities. From major international sports events and music festivals to small-town gatherings and adventures in the great outdoors, every event is rooted in place and history. Together, they connect us with the stories of Mi'kmaw, African Nova Scotian, Acadian, francophone, and other communities, reminding us of who we are and where we come from. Halifax's cultural and linguistic diversity, including its francophone community, enriches the visitor experience and strengthens our ability to welcome the world.

**Our parks, arenas, and trails are ready to deliver.** Here, equitable growth meets visitor readiness.

Permitting and regulatory systems are clear, trusted, making it easier to bring bold ideas to life. Event producers have the partnerships, talent, and tools they need to deliver with excellence and heart.

**Events are also a driving force in Halifax's visitor economy.** They inspire travel, extend stays, and fill hotels, restaurants, and attractions. Visitors who come for an event discover more of the region—turning cultural, sporting, and community gatherings into catalysts for tourism growth and shared economic benefit.

**A shared portfolio strategy keeps public and private investment working in harmony,** with hosting ambitions that are clear, confident, and widely understood. Halifax is known across the country and beyond as a place where authentic, daring, and deeply memorable events are not only possible but encouraged, nurtured, and cherished as part of our signature identity.

**Event support follows clear, transparent criteria,** directly linked to shared impact measures that assess each proposal against what matters most to Halifax. We build in the flexibility to add tailored measures when the moment calls for it. Equally, resilience is built into the system—financial, workforce, and organizational—ensuring Halifax's event sector can grow while protecting its cultural foundations and supporting the stability of cornerstone events. In all of it, we make sure environmental sustainability and accessibility aren't an afterthought—they're part of the plan.

This is the Halifax of 2035: connected by our stories, strengthened by our events, and ready to welcome the world—again and again.

## SECTION 5

# Vision, Mission, Values, and Strategy

### A shared framework to guide our path forward.

A strategy is like a living system—each part connected, each influencing the actions and decisions we take together. The vision sets our shared aspiration, giving us a clear and inspiring long-term direction. The mission defines the role our industry plays in making that vision real, while our values shape how we work and build relationships along the way.

### A vision everyone can see themselves in.

Together, these elements form a framework designed to create meaningful impact. They are here to guide, inspire, and keep us working toward something greater than ourselves. Everyone who plays a role in bringing this vision to life—across organizations, communities, and the event sector—should be able to see themselves and find both purpose and pride within it.

#### Vision

Canada’s favourite gathering place  
—where events flourish.

#### Mission

To support and grow events that reflect our  
culture, communities, and environment.

We do this by working together to foster conditions where events contribute to broader community well-being, cultural vitality, tourism, and economic development across the region.

#### Values

##### **Purposeful:**

united in achieving shared strategic outcomes.

##### **Collaborative:**

working together across the industry and the region.

##### **Sustainable:**

committed to both financial and environmental responsibility.

##### **Inclusive:**

reflecting all of our people

#### Strategy

**Impactful events**—rooted in our culture, powered by local assets, and built through collaboration across our industry.

## SECTION 6

# Strategic Pillars

### Grounded in our strengths, focused on what's next

To bring our vision and mission to life, we have identified three strategic pillars that reflect Halifax's strengths and prepare us for what's ahead. These pillars guide how we plan, prioritize, and organize our work, so each event we support helps bring people together, celebrates our culture, and strengthens our economy and communities.

Authenticity	Assets	Alignment
<b>Authentic by nature</b>	<b>Building on what makes us strong</b>	<b>Shared goals, collective action</b>
We will create the conditions for events in Halifax to feel like they belong here — rooted in our landscapes, cultural heritage, and the communities that bring them to life. This means shaping an environment that enables events to naturally reflect the diverse voices, traditions, geography, and evolving cultures that shape Halifax's identity, creating experiences where residents feel proud, visitors feel connected, and the city's cultural, social, and economic life thrives.	We will build on the foundations that make great events possible—our people, places, and the connections between them. That means making the most of what we already have while creating future-ready spaces where music, sport, and community can come together in step with HRM's long-term capital plans. Our events will champion sustainability and accessibility, welcome new communities, encourage public transit, and invite participation through volunteering and co-creation.	We will strengthen collaboration across governments, organizers, and partners by working toward shared cultural, economic, and community goals. With clear ways of working together, shared measures of success, and coordinated support, we will build an environment where events can thrive—across sectors, throughout the seasons, and in every community. This strategy will be the touchstone that keeps us aligned, inspired, and moving forward together.

### From Strategy to Action

Implementation happens through the Halifax Regional Event Strategy Action Plan, updated each year to translate this vision into concrete priorities and initiatives. The Strategy provides direction; the Action Plan delivers the work — keeping progress flexible, measurable, and responsive to change.

Funding and event approvals continue through existing municipal and partner mechanisms, informed by the policies and frameworks shaped through this process.

## SECTION 6.1

# Authenticity

Events in Halifax are more than dates on a calendar – they are living expressions of the people and places that shape this region. They carry the character of a place that honours its past, reflects who we are today, and looks confidently into the future.

A strong event portfolio should reflect all of Halifax – urban, rural, and wild – through the experiences it offers and the connections it creates. It should make space for voices and ideas from across the region, creating opportunities for events that share Halifax’s stories in ways that feel real to the people and places at their heart. The stability of local leadership and workforce capacity ensures these stories are supported and delivered for the long term.

Our sense of place is deeply connected to our history, especially that of the Mi’kmaq, for whom Kijipuktuk has been home since time immemorial. It also carries the stories of African Nova Scotian, Acadian, and francophone communities’ long-standing traditions of music, art, and sport that bring people together and the deep ties to land, water, and seasons that shape life across the region. Equally, events reflect present-day voices and lived cultures, including newcomers and emerging communities, ensuring they feel rooted in both heritage and contemporary life. This includes recognizing language as a key part of culture and accessibility ensuring events reflect Halifax’s linguistic diversity—English, French, Mi’kmaw, and others—in ways that strengthen belonging and participation.

As Halifax continues to grow and diversify, building respectful, ongoing relationships with communities — established and emerging — will ensure events reflect both heritage and present-day voices. Engagement will look different for each community, but together these perspectives create the foundation for events that feel rooted in the people and places they represent.

Our role is not to define what is or is not authentic, but to create the environment where authentic expression can thrive naturally through connection to people and place.

This strategy sets the conditions for events to reflect Halifax’s people, places, and stories. By aligning funding, planning, partnerships, and program design, we will enable an event environment where local ideas grow, visiting events connect meaningfully to place, and Halifax’s identity is expressed in ways that are diverse, inclusive, and evolving over time.





#### WHAT IT ACHIEVES

- **A balanced, year-round event portfolio** that reflects Halifax's people, places, and stories across seasons, geographies, and genres.
- **Clear growth pathways for homegrown and visiting events**, enabling local festivals to scale while attracting new events aligned with Halifax's identity and goals.
- **Modernized funding programs** that embed cultural connection, community impact, and economic value into transparent decision-making.
- **Marketing and storytelling partnerships** that elevate Halifax's identity locally, nationally, and internationally while strengthening resident pride.
- **Practical tools and resources that help event organizers** build meaningful relationships with communities and integrate cultural representation into event design and delivery.
- **Deeper visitor and resident engagement** through events that feel connected to place, leading to longer stays, repeat visits, and stronger local participation.

## Strategic Priorities - Authenticity

Strategic Priority	Description	Outcome by 2035
<b>1. Develop a balanced, resilient, and strategic event portfolio</b>	Create a regional event portfolio that reflects Halifax's identity across seasons, geographies, and communities—urban, rural, and natural—and across delivery models including non-profit, community, hybrid, and commercial. Value stability and cultural connection alongside vibrancy, economic impact, and growth.	Halifax's event calendar offers a balanced mix of events that celebrate place, engage communities, and attracts visitors across all seasons and settings.
<b>2. Enable homegrown events and new event creation</b>	Provide pathways for local and community-led events to scale in impact, cultural depth, stability, and sustainability, while ensuring visiting events connect meaningfully to Halifax's people, culture, and places.	Halifax develops a pipeline of locally grown and visiting events that contribute to both tourism goals and cultural vibrancy, showcasing creative leadership and strengthening the city's identity.
<b>3. Transform event funding programs</b>	Align event funding systems so they are transparent, efficient, and values-based—enabling cultural connection, community impact, organizational stability, and economic growth, across geographies and delivery models in alignment with desired outcomes and impact.	Funding is transparent, predictable, and fair, strategically aligned with Halifax's desired outcomes. It sustains the organizations that deliver events, supports innovation across geographies and delivery models, and rewards connections to Halifax's people, culture, and places.
<b>4. Support storytelling and event visibility</b>	Expand resources, partnerships, and programs that help Halifax events share their stories and reach audiences, while also using events as a platform to showcase Halifax's culture and identity.	Halifax's events engage residents and visitors through meaningful stories, strong cultural representation, and experiences that reflect the region's character while attracting audiences nationally and internationally.
<b>5. Build tools and capacity for connection</b>	Develop practical resources, frameworks, and training that help event organizers meaningfully connect with Halifax's people, places, languages, and communities.	Event organizers have the knowledge, relationships, and tools to incorporate local culture and community voices into event design, delivery, and storytelling.

## SECTION 6.2

# Assets

Halifax's event assets are the stage on which our stories come to life. From waterfront gathering spaces to rural trails, from the people who plan and deliver events to the landscapes that inspire them—these are the foundations of unforgettable experiences.

Over the next decade, we will invest in, protect, and grow these assets so they serve our communities, strengthen our economy, and welcome the world. Great events don't just happen; they're built on places people love, spaces that work, and a skilled, passionate workforce ready to deliver.

That means ensuring events are considered in the planning and renewal of community, cultural, and recreational facilities, making the most of what we already have while encouraging innovation through temporary and scalable infrastructure. It also means valuing our natural geography as a defining asset, balancing use and protection in ways that align with Halifax's climate and sustainability goals.

The people behind Halifax's events, from dedicated volunteers to seasoned organizers, are vital assets. We will ensure the long-term sustainability of this workforce by providing training, resources, and volunteer engagement opportunities, so our sector continues to deliver high-quality experiences.

Finally, shared resources can improve the industry and its people. Beyond occasional areas of direct competition, the event industry can collaborate to build and share resources, including equipment, marketing, best practices, databases, software, and even staff. By doing so, we create efficiencies, foster collaboration, and boost the industry's ability to respond to new opportunities.





#### WHAT IT ACHIEVES

- A clear, forward-looking plan for integrating events into infrastructure planning.
- A connected, resilient, and confident sector with the people and tools to deliver.
- A welcoming, inclusive events ecosystem that reflects Halifax's diversity.
- A sector where people can grow, develop, and thrive through professional and volunteer pathways.
- A valued and protected natural environment that is used responsibly and sustainably.
- A flexible infrastructure base that supports innovation, legacy, and access to events across the region.
- Events and venues that are accessible in the broadest sense—physically, financially, geographically, and culturally—ensure full participation for all residents and visitors.
- An events industry that aligns with HaliFACT and acts sustainably.

## Strategic Priorities - Assets

Strategic Priority	Description	Outcome by 2035
<b>6. Integrate events into infrastructure planning and renewal</b>	Embed events in HRM regional planning processes for new or renewed community, recreational, artistic, and park facilities, so venues and spaces serve both everyday use and event hosting needs.	Halifax has modernized, flexible, and community-accessible facilities that support local participation and occasional large-scale events.
<b>7. Strengthen and sustain the event workforce and volunteers</b>	Build a resilient, inclusive event workforce through volunteer renewal, professional training, diversity, and best practice sharing. Support events as part of Halifax's creative economy, sustaining long-term delivery capacity.	Halifax's event sector has the people, skills, and confidence to deliver events of every scale, while offering pathways for talent development and community participation.
<b>8. Advance sustainability in event delivery</b>	Align event delivery with HaliFACT and embed sustainability practices across the sector. Protect and make better use of natural and built assets through supportive permitting, planning, and event design, ensuring events contribute positively to Halifax's climate goals, accessibility, and community well-being.	Halifax is recognized for events that showcase its landscapes, streets, and venues while upholding environmental and community sustainability.
<b>9. Develop flexible and scalable infrastructure solutions</b>	Explore modular, temporary, and scalable infrastructure solutions to meet demand affordably, flexibly, and with lower risk, enabling broader access and innovation.	Halifax uses flexible infrastructure to support diverse events, filling gaps in capacity and enabling the industry without overburdening capital budgets.

## SECTION 6.3

# Alignment

Alignment is our shared compass—a commitment to move together toward a vision belonging to all of Halifax.

In an aligned sector, partners—from funders to producers to governance bodies—move in concert toward shared outcomes, knowing exactly how their efforts fit into Halifax’s bigger story.

When we move together with purpose, we unlock more than efficiency; we create a resilient and ambitious sector built to deliver for the long term. Alignment ensures our efforts are not just coordinated but amplified, creating events that leave a lasting mark on Halifax’s communities, economy, and cultural life. It also ensures that events are accessible in the broadest sense—welcoming participation across geography, culture, and capacity.

It unites the public, private, and community sectors in shaping a thriving, inclusive, and sustainable event landscape. While no single organization delivers success alone, intentional collaboration across municipalities, funders, producers, and support systems makes it possible to achieve more than the sum of our parts. Clear roles, shared intent, and open communication—at every level, including governance—keep everyone on course.

Discover Halifax will strengthen its role as the backbone for this ecosystem—coordinating, connecting, and providing the stability and analysis that enable partners to do their part. The Event Industry Advisory Group will serve as a delivery-focused forum that captures the views of all parts of the industry. The Safety Advisory Forum for Events (SAFE) will focus on making events happen successfully and efficiently, with the purpose of enabling safe, effective delivery while reducing barriers and costs.

Progress will be measured through research, evaluation, and a comprehensive impact framework that captures economic, tourism, cultural, community, and profile benefits. Alignment also means residents see the value of events, understand the benefits they bring, and feel part of the story we’re sharing with the world.

When we work in alignment, Halifax becomes more than a collection of individual efforts—it becomes a united force. We set our sights higher, achieve more together, and ensure every event strengthens the fabric of our communities for years to come.





#### WHAT IT ACHIEVES

- A clear, coordinated system that enables events to succeed through shared roles, transparent processes, and consistent support.
- Decision-making consistently delivers on the region's shared goals and desired outcomes.
- A flexible, evolving strategy that grows with the city and industry while remaining rooted in shared values and evidence.
- More informed residents who understand the value of events, and stronger relationships between the public, partners, and the sector.
- A sector guided by evidence, strengthened through partnership, and driven by long-term vision.

## Strategic Priorities - Alignment

Strategic Priority	Description	Outcome by 2035
<b>10. Strengthen the backbone and governance</b>	Establish Discover Halifax as the recognized backbone for Halifax's event ecosystem—providing the stability, analysis, strategy, and coordination that connect partners, align policies, and enable the sector to move forward together. Support clearer responsibilities across partners and governance bodies, including SEAC, to strengthen the system.	A coordinated, trusted system where each partner contributes confidently, guided by shared priorities and evidence-based decisions.
<b>11. Establish an industry voice and connection</b>	Create and sustain a delivery-focused advisory group and annual forum that captures industry perspectives, strengthens collaboration, and informs policy and program development.	Industry perspectives are embedded in governance processes, creating more relevant, responsive policies and stronger trust between producers and funders.
<b>12. Enable safe and supportive delivery</b>	Transform the Special Events Task Force into Safety Advisory Forum for Events (SAFE) with the purpose of enabling events while ensuring safety, efficiency, coordination, and reducing unnecessary barriers and costs. This includes recognizing the needs of both urban and rural communities in planning, permitting, and service delivery.	An efficient, enabling forum that balances safety with delivery, making Halifax a more supportive, predictable, and affordable place to host events.
<b>13. Develop and apply an impact framework</b>	Develop and apply a comprehensive impact framework that captures economic, cultural, social, and profile outcomes of events, ensuring decisions are grounded in shared values.	Events are consistently evaluated across multiple dimensions and clearly communicated, ensuring investments align with Halifax's broader cultural, social, and economic priorities while strengthening support.
<b>14. Build public trust and understanding</b>	Strengthen public understanding of the value of events through clear communication, transparent reporting, and community engagement.	Broader public support for events, greater tolerance of temporary disruptions, and stronger community participation and audiences.
<b>15. Enact and evolve a Major Event &amp; Growth Policy Framework</b>	Implement a values-based framework for how major events are attracted, supported, and delivered—aligning proactive growth with Halifax's identity, tourism, and community vibrancy. The framework will also ensure that major events leave meaningful legacies, from improved facilities and community capacity to environmental and cultural initiatives.	A living framework that strengthens Halifax's event portfolio, supports tourism and community vibrancy, and ensures events contribute to regional vitality.

## SECTION 7

# Supporting Delivery

A strong sector-wide foundation is needed to support the three strategic pillars of assets, alignment, and authenticity. Partners need to understand their roles in developing and delivering an overall event portfolio for Halifax, and all must share the same ambitions and strategy regarding event attraction. The many stakeholders who play a role in the delivery of this strategy can achieve this in six key ways:

1. Roles and responsibilities
2. Governance
3. Inclusive relationship building
4. Communication
5. Research and evaluation
6. Action planning and review



## SECTION 7.1

# Roles and Responsibilities

### What this means

Delivering on this strategy is a shared effort with different organizations and individuals, each playing distinct but connected roles. These roles will be formalized through the Strategy Action Plan, reflected in shared workplans, defined in agreed policies, and, where appropriate, confirmed through memoranda of understanding (MOUs) between organizations.

Public sector partners carry responsibilities ranging from big-picture strategy to on-the-ground delivery, ensuring every event contributes to Halifax's cultural vibrancy, economic growth, and community well-being. Critical agencies and their responsibilities include:

**HALIFAX** **Halifax Regional Municipality (HRM)** delivers operational support from licensing to crowd management. Through departments such as Civic Events and committees such as the Safety Advisory Forum for Events (SAFE), HRM plays a vital role in ensuring the regulatory environment is enabling, consistent, and efficient. HRM event funding and value-in-kind (VIK) programs should be regularly reviewed to ensure they are fit-for-purpose, clearly communicated, and targeted with criteria, eligibility, and processes that directly support the strategy's outcomes and industry growth. HRM also ensures event activity aligns with broader municipal strategies.



**Discover Halifax (DH)** is the backbone organization, anchoring Halifax's event ecosystem. It provides the stability, strategy, analysis, and coordination needed to connect partners, align policies, and strengthen delivery. Its role includes leading and coordinating both the event attraction strategy and bids for major international, national, and regional events, as well as stewarding the long-term development and growth of the regional event portfolio, convening partners around shared priorities, and embedding analysis and reporting into decision-making. DH also leads the creation of rolling three-year Action Plans that guide implementation of this strategy.



**Events East (EE)** manages and operates two of Halifax's most significant venues, making it a critical leader and key partner in the region's event attraction strategy and the growth of the events portfolio. With facilities that anchor Halifax's capacity to host some of the largest and most high-profile events in Atlantic Canada, EE's role includes attracting and hosting events that elevate Halifax's national and international profile, delivering professional event services and infrastructure that meet global standards, and supporting innovation and excellence in event delivery.



**Events Nova Scotia (ENS)**, through the Department of Communities, Culture and Heritage, supports major event attraction and sport hosting at the provincial level. ENS plays a lead role in multi-sport bids, intergovernmental coordination, and partners with Discover Halifax on shared services such as economic impact analysis and research. Its alignment is critical to bid success and to connecting with provincial policy.

**Provincial and Federal Agencies**, such as Invest Nova Scotia, Build Nova Scotia, and the Atlantic Canada Opportunities Agency may provide strategic funding and investment in events and bids, support capability-building programs, and ensure policy and advocacy are aligned so Halifax events connect to broader economic and cultural agendas. As they oversee certain regulations and licenses affecting event organizers, they also help shape an enabling environment for events to thrive.

**Public Safety and Regulatory Bodies**, such as emergency services, public health, and accessibility advisors, ensure events are safe, inclusive, and compliant. They are integral to SAFE, risk mitigation, emergency preparedness, accessibility and equity in event design and delivery, and to equipping organizers with the information and advice needed to meet all regulations.

## **Private Sector and Local Economic Partners**

The private sector is a driving force of Halifax's event economy, creating jobs, generating income, and investing in infrastructure and services such as staging, production, catering, and logistics. From independent producers and promoters to venue operators, suppliers, and creative agencies, private sector partners are at the forefront of event delivery and innovation. This also includes organizations like the Halifax Partnership and business improvement districts, which work directly with businesses and communities to drive economic growth, enhance place-making, and support events that bring vibrancy and economic benefit to their districts. Their entrepreneurial energy, market insight, and operational expertise are essential to realizing the ambitions of this strategy, in areas such as:

- Leading on innovation in areas such as sustainability, digital engagement, and inclusive design.
- Collaborating with public and non-profit partners to co-create events reflecting community values and priorities.
- Contributing to the development of a balanced and resilient event portfolio that supports year-round activity and regional spread.
- Responding to market trends and audience demand, helping to keep Halifax's event offerings fresh, competitive, and relevant.
- Aligning events with broader economic development strategies, investment priorities, and place-making goals ensure that events contribute to Halifax's long-term prosperity and community vibrancy.

## SUCCESS LOOKS LIKE

A sector where public leadership, private innovation, and community voices work together to make Halifax's events world-class, meaningful, and inclusive.

- Public sector organizations provide leadership, coordination, infrastructure, funding, and policy alignment that enable the event sector to flourish.
- By working in partnership with government, community, and cultural organizations, the private sector helps ensure Halifax's events are not only commercially successful but also meaningful, inclusive, and impactful.
- Roles and responsibilities are clearly understood, built into action planning, and formalized through MOUs.
- Ongoing dialogue and knowledge sharing between private and public partners aligns goals and reduces barriers to delivery.
- Recognition of the private sector's role not just as service providers, but as strategic partners in building Halifax's reputation as a world-class event destination and as potential recipients of public support.



## SECTION 7.2

# Governance

### What this means

Governance provides the structure and accountability needed to deliver this strategy effectively. As the backbone organization, Discover Halifax has primary responsibility for establishing, reviewing, and supporting the governance entities that enable strategy delivery and alignment.

Halifax Regional Municipality (HRM) also carries responsibility for reviewing and refining governance bodies to ensure they create an enabling environment for the sector. These efforts enrich Halifax's position as a city that is efficient to work with and where events can thrive.

The main governance bodies are:

**Special Events Advisory Committee (SEAC)** – ensures investment decision-making supports the outcomes of this strategy. An early Action Plan priority is to review SEAC's remit so its role is clear, transparent, and aligned with this strategy's goals.

**Safety Advisory Forum for Events (SAFE)** - a solution-focused group providing an enabling environment for events and clear, efficient regulatory processes. Its focus is on facilitating event delivery while ensuring public safety.

**Event Industry Advisory Group (EIAG)** – A collaborative, independently chaired forum that provides public partners with industry insight, supports alignment between public processes and industry standards, and ensures operational realities and emerging needs are heard. Discover Halifax will provide secretariat support.

**Halifax Events Industry Forum** - a sector-wide gathering for updates, knowledge-sharing, and networking. The Forum will be convened by the Events Industry Advisory Group.

### SUCCESS LOOKS LIKE

Effective governance ensures Halifax's event sector is guided by clear structures, informed decision-making, and strong connections between industry and public partners.

- Clear, interconnected decision-making bodies and advisory groups with terms of reference and membership that reflect the intent of this strategy.
- Agreed terms of reference for SAFE, supporting an enabling environment for event organizers, streamlining regulatory processes, and ensuring safe, efficient event delivery.
- Active and consistent participation by the private sector in governance structures, with EIAG and its subgroups ensuring industry perspectives consistently inform policy, process, and implementation.

## SECTION 7.3

# Building Relationships Across Halifax's Diverse Communities

### What this means

Inclusive relationship building ensures Halifax's event sector is shaped by the voices, histories, and leadership of the communities that call this region home. It is a deliberate, ongoing practice that strengthens cultural vitality, promotes reconciliation, and supports an inclusive, resilient sector.

This work begins with the Mi'kmaw people of Kijipuktuk, the past, present, and future caretakers of this land, whose history, culture, and leadership are fundamental to Halifax's identity and future. These relationships will be ongoing, respectful, and reciprocal—rooted in trust and mutual learning.

It extends to African Nova Scotian communities, recognizing their deep historic roots, cultural leadership, and the need to address the impacts of systemic inequities. It also includes Halifax's culturally diverse communities, including Acadian, Gaelic, newcomer, 2SLGBTQIA+, and francophone communities.

The nature of these relationships, and the ways in which they shape the event ecosystem, will be guided by the history, lived experience, and priorities of each community, recognizing that engagement will not look the same for all.

These communities are essential cultural contributors and leaders in shaping the events ecosystem, and their perspectives, histories, and traditions should be embedded—not treated as peripheral—in how events are imagined, designed, and delivered. They should also be represented in governance and advisory bodies to ensure voices, perspectives, and leadership are reflected in how this strategy is implemented over time. Accessibility and inclusion—physical, cultural, and financial—are central to this work.



This is a 10-year commitment to meaningful relationship-building, based on trust, transparency, and shared vision. This commitment includes ensuring events create space for diverse voices and reflect the intersections of identities that shape Halifax's lived experiences. These partnerships will strengthen cultural vibrancy, support reconciliation, and co-create an inclusive, resilient event sector for all.

#### SUCCESS LOOKS LIKE

An inclusive event sector where partnerships, representation, and shared stewardship ensure Halifax's events reflect the full diversity and richness of its communities.

- Long-term partnerships grounded in trust, reciprocity, and shared stewardship of the region's cultural future.
- An events portfolio that authentically reflects Halifax's cultural richness, across geographies, histories, and communities.
- Community members feeling seen, respected, and empowered through participation and leadership.
- Governance structures and delivery systems that are inclusive by design, not just intention.
- A growing, living culture of mutual learning and collective celebration.
- Specific, measurable, and evolving commitments embedded within the Action Plan.
- Cultural competency, anti-racism, and accessibility training integrated into governance and delivery structures, supporting systemic inclusion.
- Storytelling, language, ceremony, and lived experience respectfully embedded into the design and communication of events.



## SECTION 7.4

# Communicating the Value of Events

### What this means

Clear, consistent communication is vital for cultivating shared understanding and support for Halifax's event sector. This means developing core messages about the value of events and sharing them regularly through every stakeholder channel.

When public, private, and non-event agencies deliver these top-level messages together, they create a unified narrative that amplifies the importance of events, builds recognition of their benefits, and reinforces the sector's role in the region's cultural and economic life.

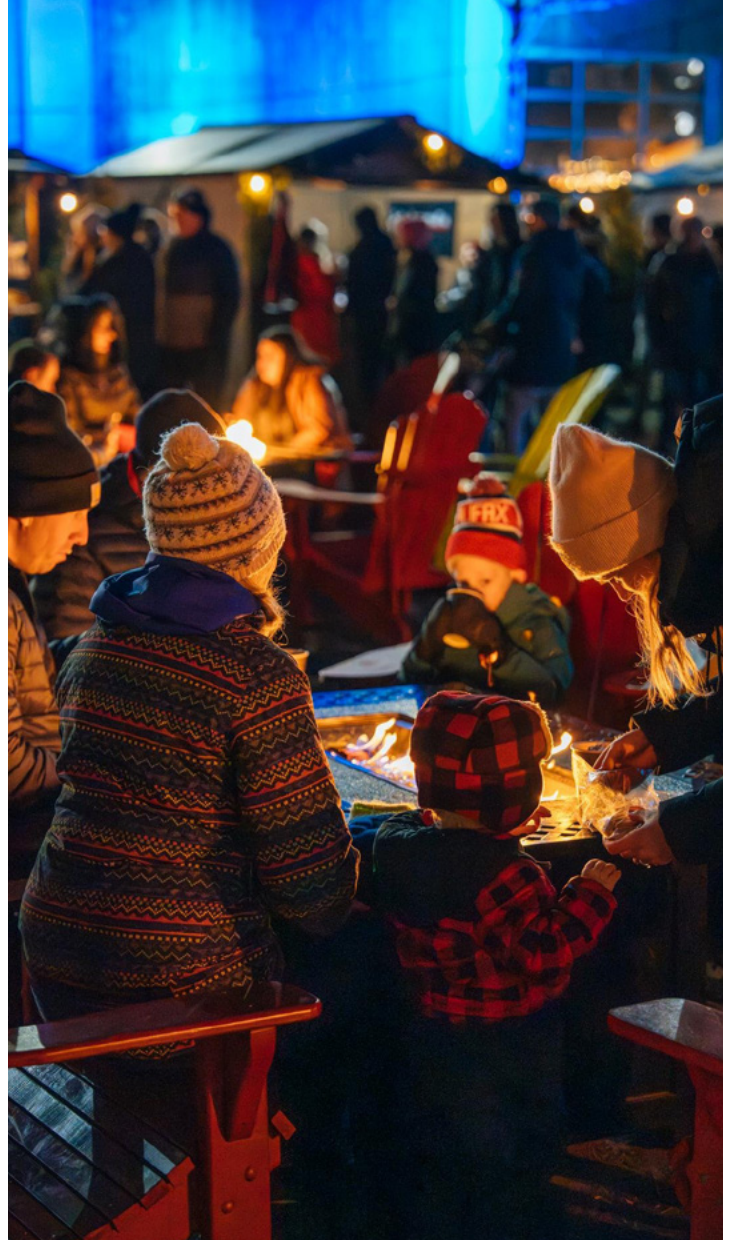
These communications should reflect not only the priorities of the event sector but also align, wherever relevant, with the wider goals of the region, such as advancing the tourism brand, encouraging public transit use, protecting natural assets, and demonstrating economic return.

Communications should also draw from the Impact Framework, ensuring measures and outcomes are reported consistently, clearly, and in ways that build public trust and understanding, while sharing the social, cultural, and community benefits of events.

### SUCCESS LOOKS LIKE

A region where the value of events is clearly understood, widely shared, and consistently championed.

- Unified messaging across public, private, and non-event agencies.
- Core messages on the value of events seamlessly integrated into event communications.
- Key messages echoed by the wider stakeholder group, demonstrating broad understanding and support for the positive impacts of events.
- Residents are regularly informed of results through clear reporting on economic, social, and cultural outcomes.



## SECTION 7.5

# Action Planning, Measurement, and Review

### What this means

Action planning, measurement, and review keep Halifax's event strategy focused on its vision, anchored in evidence, and agile in response to change over the next decade. This ensures Halifax's event sector continues to lead with purpose, delivering experiences that strengthen our culture, economy, and community life.

To ensure the effective delivery of the Halifax Regional Event Strategy over its ten-year horizon, a rolling three-year Action Plan will guide implementation. The initial plan will detail actions, milestones, and responsibilities for the first two years, with broader priorities for year three. Each year, a new year will be added, maintaining a live, responsive roadmap.

The Action Plan will be reviewed and updated annually by Discover Halifax in collaboration with HRM, the Event Industry Advisory Group (EIAG), and key stakeholders. This process will ensure alignment with strategic goals and responsiveness to evolving needs, opportunities, and external factors. The Action Plan will include clear performance measures.

Transparency is central to building trust with the event sector and the public. Regular updates through public reports, stakeholder briefings, and online dashboards will ensure the strategy's progress remains visible and accountable over time.



## Measurement and Impact Framework

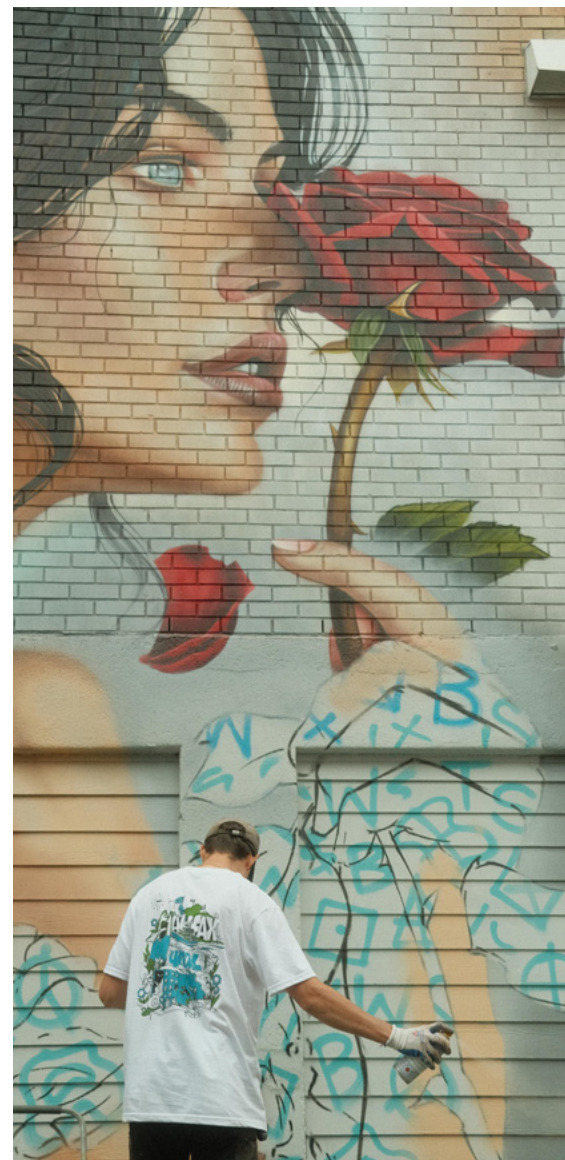
Measurement of this strategy will focus on whether Halifax's event ecosystem is becoming more supportive, inclusive, and resilient. Progress will be assessed both at the event level—capturing cultural, community, economic, and profile impacts—and at the system level, including clarity of processes, stability of cornerstone events, and alignment across partners.

Detailed indicators and baselines will be developed through the Action Plan process and refined at the five-year review, ensuring measures remain relevant and actionable.

**Portfolio contribution:** The aggregated outputs of all events will be used to assess how the event sector contributes to cultural, community, economic, and profile objectives.

**Event impact:** A detailed framework will be established focusing on five measurement areas: economic development, tourism, cultural vitality, brand and profile, and community impact.

**Progress against the Action Plan:** Annual reporting against the Action Plan to SEAC and HRM, as well as discussion with EIAG, will assess progress, risks, and recommendations, including whether governance, funding, and delivery systems are becoming clearer, more efficient, and better aligned.



## Mid-Strategy Review

A comprehensive review will be conducted in year five to assess progress, confirm relevance, and provide an opportunity to adjust or adopt new strategic priorities for the second half of the strategy. The review will also evaluate governance effectiveness, alignment with regional priorities, and the continued suitability of the impact framework.

### SUCCESS LOOKS LIKE

Halifax's event ecosystem is guided by a strategy that is structured yet adaptable, with decisions grounded in evidence, transparency, and shared ownership.

- A dynamic Action Plan that evolves annually, informed by real-time feedback, stakeholder input, and changing political, economic, and social conditions.
- Clear, measurable priorities and initiatives with defined responsibilities and timelines.
- Regular reporting of the contribution of events to regional priorities.
- An agreed impact framework that measures events against what matters most to Halifax across economic, cultural, social, and profile outcomes.
- A mid-strategy review confirming relevance, governance effectiveness, and alignment with broader regional priorities.

## APPENDIX A

# Project Governance and Advisory Committee

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### Project Team

The project team provided coordination, insight, and technical support throughout the development of this strategy.

**Billy Comer** *Manager, Events - Halifax Regional Municipality*

**Paul Forrest** *Director, Events Nova Scotia - Events Nova Scotia*

**Colby Pridham** *Director of Business Development - Events East*

**Mark Teeple** *Vice President, Festivals & Events - Discover Halifax*

Consulting support for research, facilitation, and strategy development was provided by:

**Susan Sawbridge** – *Daylight Ltd*

**Stuart Turner** – *Purple Moon Events*

**Stephen McLean** – *McLean Events*

**Karen Weir** – *Eventyr*

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### Regional Event Strategy Advisory Committee

The Advisory Committee guided the development of the strategy, providing input and advice from across Halifax's event ecosystem. The Committee was chaired by Tenille Goodspeed, Executive Director of the Halifax Jazz Festival.

Name	Title	Organization
<b>Jamie Ferguson</b>	Chief Executive Officer	Sport Nova Scotia
<b>Gary Furlong</b>	General Manager	Canada Games Centre
<b>Tenille Goodspeed</b>	Executive Director	Halifax Jazz Festival
<b>Luke Harnish</b>	Owner	Shore Club
<b>Tracy Jones-Grant</b>	Managing Director, Office of Diversity & Inclusion	Halifax Regional Municipality
<b>Fiona Kerr</b>	Executive Director	Halifax Pride
<b>Tony Mancini</b>	Regional Councillor District 6 Chair SEAC	Halifax Regional Municipality
<b>Julien Matawana</b>	Executive Director	ANSMA
<b>Joe McGuinness</b>	Owner	Legendary Hospitality Inc
<b>Mario Noury</b>	Directeur général	Conseil Communautaire du Grand-Havre
<b>Melany Nugent-Noble</b>	Executive Director	Nocturne
<b>Jeff Ransome</b>	General Manager	Halifax Marriott Harbourfront Hotel
<b>Tim Rissesco</b>	Executive Director	Downtown Dartmouth Business Commission
<b>Sherri Robbins</b>	Executive Director	Halifax International Marathon Society
<b>Laura Seaboyer</b>	Principal	Nikanusk Consulting
<b>Micah Smith</b>	Executive Producer	Crescendo Fest
<b>Gordon Stevens</b>	Chief Operating Officer	Halifax Partnership
<b>Kevin Tanner</b>	Executive Director	Dalhousie Arts Centre
<b>Louis Thomas</b>	Owner	Sonic Entertainment
<b>Anne Warburton</b>	Exhibition Manager	Halifax County Exhibition

## APPENDIX B

# Engagement Summary

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Extensive engagement with event organizers, community representatives, government partners, and industry stakeholders across Halifax's event ecosystem informed the development of this strategy.

Between April and September 2025, the project team conducted one-on-one meetings, surveys, and workshops, reaching more than 150 individuals and organizations in total.

A detailed record of engagement activities is available in the companion report Halifax Regional Event Strategy: Phase One – Insight and Discovery.

### One-on-One Meetings

A total of 24 one-on-one and small-group interviews were conducted between April and June 2025 with representatives from government partners, community and cultural organizations, event producers, and tourism and business stakeholders.

Discussions focused on governance, coordination, funding models, inclusion, workforce, and system sustainability.

### Surveys

Four surveys were conducted between May and September 2025 to capture input and feedback.

- **Special Events Task Force Survey** – 11 responses from members of SETF.
- **Focus Group Survey** – 9 responses from invitees unable to attend in person.
- **Industry Survey** – 22 responses from event professionals, suppliers, and organizers.
- **Community Consultation Survey** – 275 responses from residents across the Halifax Region.

### Workshops and Focus Groups

Four workshops and eleven focus groups were held between April and June 2025.

Session	Target Participants
<b>Sport Events</b> ( <i>Workshop</i> )	Leaders from PSOs, sport event producers, and venues
<b>Cultural Events</b> ( <i>Workshop</i> )	Festivals, producers, service organizations
<b>Music Events</b> ( <i>Workshop</i> )	Festivals, promoters, service organizations
<b>Tourism and Economy</b> ( <i>Workshop</i> )	Businesses, marketing managers, accommodation providers, tour operators
<b>Regional Council</b>	Councillors (through open house session)
<b>Business Improvement Districts</b>	BID managers and board reps
<b>Mi'kmaq Communities and Organizations</b>	Mi'kmaw leaders, urban Mi'kmaw orgs
<b>Acadian &amp; Francophone Communities and Organizations</b>	Community and cultural orgs
<b>African Nova Scotian and Black Communities and Organizations</b>	Community leaders, cultural producers
<b>Major Events</b>	Organizations or individuals with experience in major events
<b>Commercial Producers</b>	Commercial event producers and venue Owners/Managers
<b>HRM Signature Events</b>	HRM-designated signature events
<b>Musquodoboit and Eastern Shore</b>	Local community event organizers
<b>Peggy's Cove and Hubbard's</b>	Local community event organizers and site visits
<b>Hotel Association of Nova Scotia</b>	Members of HANS

