



HUTT CITY COUNCIL EVENTS STRATEGY

ENVIRONMENTAL SCAN

31 MARCH 2025

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INTRODUCTION

Background

Hutt City Council (HCC) is developing an Events Strategy that will support its aspiration to attract events to Te Awa Kairangi ki Tai Lower Hutt and, in doing so, create economic and social benefits for local communities.

It is expected that **partnerships** – with communities, businesses and the events industry - will underpin a successful Events Strategy; supporting the attraction, delivery and retention of major events, and helping to create memorable experiences for people living in Lower Hutt (and beyond).

To support the development of the Events Strategy, Angus & Associates was contracted by HCC to complete an initial Environmental Scan. The Environmental Scan was designed to: -

- confirm current market trends, and other factors that may shape future event opportunities for Lower Hutt.
- gather learnings from the ways in which ‘like’ cities/regions have responded to these market trends, and created opportunities for events in their communities.
- gather insights on Lower Hutt’s Unique Selling Proposition (USP) and current strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats in relation to the attraction, delivery and retention of events.

Approach

The Environmental Scan involved three components of work:

1. Understanding Local Context

A review of the event landscape in Lower Hutt and the wider Wellington (and adjacent) regions, including facilities, services and infrastructure available to support events, both public and private sector.

2. Market Analysis

- Analysis of Angus & Associates’ domestic tourism data relating to events as a driver of visitation.
- An analysis of key trends, opportunities and challenges shaping the events sector (considering events of varying types and sizes, including business and leisure events, sporting and arts events, commercial and community events, single and multi-day events, and so on).
- Five interviews with experts across different sectors of the events industry – including business events, sporting events, food and drink events, live performance events, and venues - to understand perspectives on Lower Hutt’s USP and current strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats in relation to events.

3. A Review of Comparator Regional Strategies

A review of events strategies in regions thought to have similar challenges and/or characteristics to Lower Hutt – for example, proximity to major population centres, proximity to key transport hubs, population size, core infrastructure – to provide insights on best practice.

The regions selected for review were Hastings, Taranaki, Whangārei and Rotorua in New Zealand, and Wollongong (NSW) and Yarra Valley and Dandenong Ranges (Victoria) in Australia.

Alongside the Environmental Scan, a small number of interviews were undertaken with organisers of significant regional events across New Zealand. The purpose of these interviews was to understand critical success factors from an event organiser’s perspective, and to identify any gaps and opportunities that may exist for Lower Hutt. While it was not intended that this report summarise the feedback from event organisers, some insights – for example, in relation to key industry trends – have been included as part of the Environmental Scan.

LOCAL CONTEXT

Strategic Context

To provide an understanding of strategic context and the connection of Hutt City Council's Events Strategy to the City's broader social and economic objectives, a review of the following was undertaken¹: -

- Rangahau te Korou o te Ora / Quality of Life Survey 2024 – Topline Report
- Hutt Valley Tourism Action Plan 2021
- Rautaki Whakatipu Sustainable Growth Strategy 2025-2055
- Destination Pōneke Destination Management Plan 2021-2031
- Wellington Regional Economic Development Plan 2022-2032

This review focused on understanding key drivers and areas of focus, and the implications for Hutt City Council's Events Strategy and its alignment with wider local and regional objectives.

From this review, the following emerged as **key considerations** in the development of Hutt City Council's Events Strategy: -

1. Strengthening the **visitor economy** to support local businesses and to create/sustain employment.
2. Further **diversifying** the region's economic base (with support for STEM industries, creative sectors, film, digital media and research hubs, for example).
3. Smoothing the **seasonality** of the visitor economy to provide stable year-round business.
4. Strengthening **collaboration** across the region to realise growth opportunities and to enhance economic benefits.
5. Investment that **enhances community wellbeing** and **builds economic resilience** (e.g. investment in public spaces, transport, digital connectivity and other infrastructure).
6. Environmental **sustainability and climate resilience**.
7. Strengthening **engagement of Māori, Pasifika, and diverse communities**, to strengthen social inclusion.
8. Support for **Iwi-led initiatives** that honour and **promote mana whenua traditions, language and history**.

¹ Refer to Resources (pages 26-28) for further detail.

LOCAL CONTEXT (CONT.)

Event Infrastructure

Event infrastructure refers to the hard and soft facilities, services and resources required to host events and encompasses everything from venues, to the equipment and logistical support required, and the personnel needed to run events successfully.

Event infrastructure requirements vary by event size and type (e.g. food and drink, sport/recreation, cultural, business events) but typically encompass:

Venues	Equipment	Logistics	Temporary Infrastructure	Sanitation	Power & Connectivity	Crowd Control	Personnel
Physical spaces and places	AV, lighting, staging, seating	Transport, parking, catering, security	Tents, marquees, portable toilets	Toilets and other sanitation facilities	Power and reliable internet/comms	Barriers, fencing, management	Design, management, execution

Lower Hutt has a mix of publicly- and privately-run **venues** suitable for a variety of indoor and outdoor events. Built venues are generally most suitable for small to medium-sized events.

Lower Hutt enjoys good transport networks (rail, bus, ferry, walking and cycling), connecting the city to other parts of the Wellington Region and facilitating easy access within and between neighbourhoods in Lower Hutt.

The city also offers ample parking (compared with other parts of the Region) and reliable sanitation, power and internet/communications connectivity.

All other event services can be accessed with relative ease – if not locally, then from within the wider Wellington Region - although choice may be limited in some areas.

Lower Hutt Venues

- Civic Centre Precinct (including Dowse Square)
- Fraser Park
- Hutt Rec
- McEwan Park
- Petone Memorial Park
- Wainuiomata Rugby Club (William Jones Park)
- Avalon Park
- Petone Foreshore
- Williams Park
- Hutt River
- Jackson Street
- Walter Nash Centre
- Lower Hutt Events Centre
- Queensgate Mall
- Avalon Studios
- The Little Theatre
- Daly Street (a new temporary urban space in the city centre)

LOCAL CONTEXT (CONT.)

Regional Context

As part of a wider Wellington Region, Lower Hutt is both enabled and impacted by the activities of its regional neighbours. A review of the events strategies of **Wellington City, Upper Hutt, Porirua, Kāpiti** and **Wairarapa** was undertaken to provide an understanding of the opportunities and challenges presented by Lower Hutt’s place within this wider region. A summary of each plan/strategy is appended (refer to pages 13-17) and key regional themes are summarised below.

Common Regional Objectives

- **Economic development** (a year-round calendar of events that attracts visitors and supports local businesses/ employment)
- **Community wellbeing** (vibrant communities and improved quality of life for residents)
- **Social inclusion** (inclusive, accessible and culturally diverse approaches that enhance social connection and address inequalities)
- **Sustainable cities** (waste management, low/zero carbon emission approaches, and contributions to climate resilience)
- **Connectivity and infrastructure** (investment in venues, transport and digital infrastructure that boosts tourism growth, improves liveability, and delivers economic benefits)
- **Brand positioning** (a cohesive regional brand that also allows for distinct sub-regional identities)

Common Regional Themes

- **Sector partnerships and development** (leveraging technology, innovation, and local strengths – such as film, food and drink, creative arts, agritourism – to build the region’s event offering and strengthen resilience)
- **Place-making** (enhancing public spaces, increasing walkability, and developing unique local activities and attractions, to enhance quality of life for local residents and to increase appeal to visitors)
- **Culture and heritage** (enhancing Māori cultural representation through Iwi-led initiatives, fostering events that showcase Pasifika and other cultures)
- **Community engagement** (integrating community-based initiatives to promote social inclusion)
- **Sustainability and climate adaptation** (prioritising zero carbon initiatives, environmental stewardship, aligning with climate action goals)

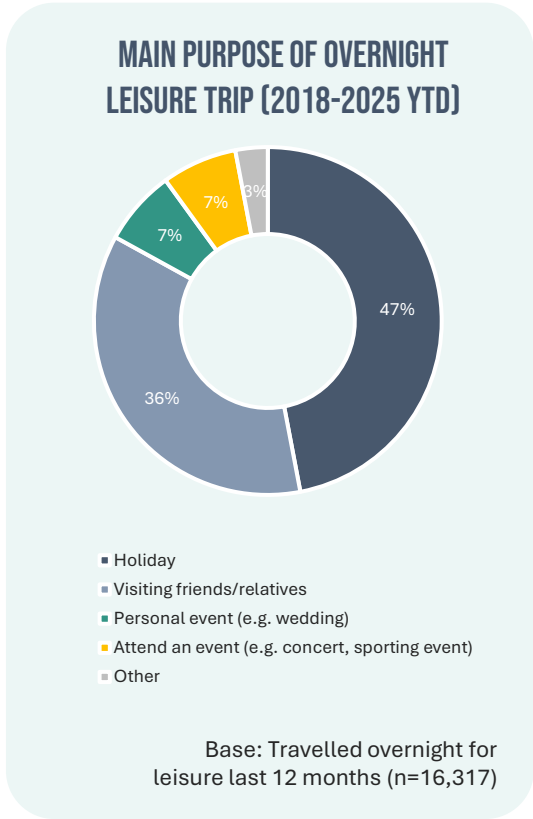
Common Regional Challenges

- **Inter- and intra-regional competition** (including for hosting rights, share of voice, regional events funding)
- **Brand awareness and differentiation of sub-regional ‘event brands’** (particularly in the context of a ‘dominant’ Wellington)
- **Infrastructure deficits** (notably of accommodation capacity outside of Wellington City, and a variable transport network)
- **Funding constraints**
- **Seasonality of event offering** (Wairarapa’s food and wine events and Wellington’s cultural calendar dominate summer and autumn, leaving spring and winter as key seasonal gaps)
- **Social license** (community support for event funding and support)

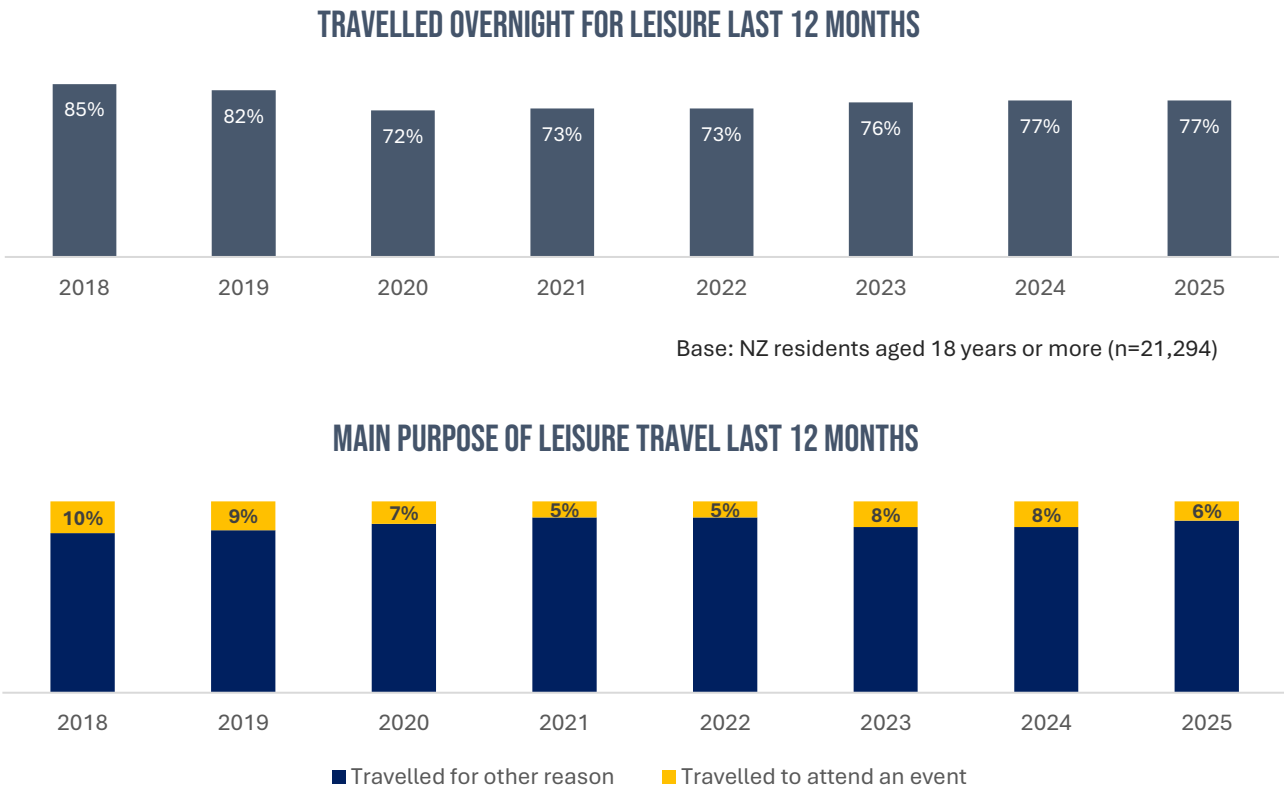
MARKET ANALYSIS – LEISURE EVENTS

There is no data available that allows for reliable ‘sizing’ of the **leisure events** market, considering the sheer diversity of events that make up the sector (live performance, cultural, sporting, food and drink, and other types of events; spectator and participation events; small and large events; part/whole and multi-day events; commercial and community events; free and ticketed events) and the composition of those attending (be they local residents, domestic or international visitors).

However, an indication of scale can be found in the domestic tourism data collected by Angus & Associates over a period of many years¹. This indicates that 7% of all domestic overnight leisure trips taken by adult New Zealanders (aged 18 years or more) are taken for the **main purpose** of attending an event (such as a concert, festival, sporting or other organised event). This proportion was at its highest in 2018 and has declined subsequently, as has domestic travel activity overall.



¹ Visitor Insights Programme, Angus & Associates, 2018-March 2025



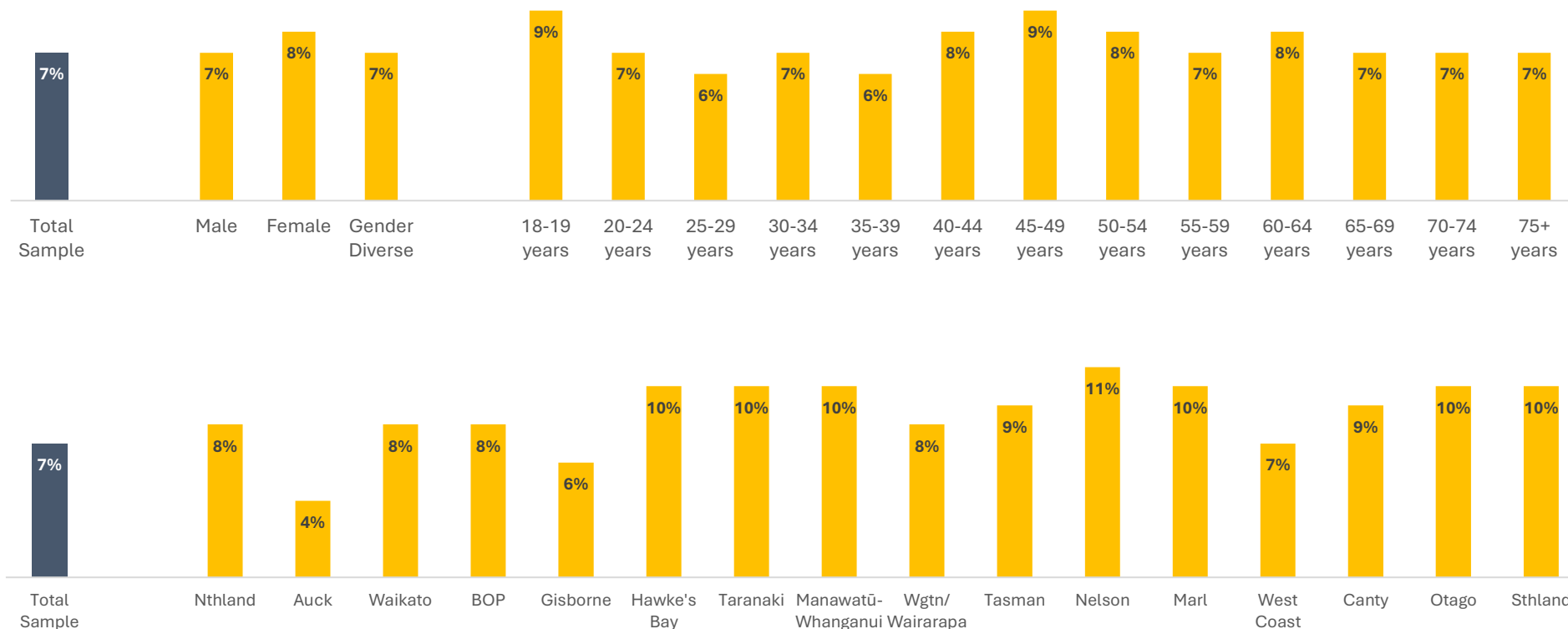
Base: NZ residents aged 18+ who have travelled overnight for leisure in the last 12 months (n=16,317)

MARKET ANALYSIS – LEISURE EVENTS (CONT.)

Events stimulate domestic tourism activity across all age groups and genders, and by residents of most regional tourism markets (including the Wellington region and key Wellington drive-range markets). Event-related travel is undertaken least frequently by Auckland residents.



EVENTS AS MAIN PURPOSE OF OVERNIGHT LEISURE TRIP (2018-2025 YTD)



Base: NZ residents aged 18+ who have travelled for leisure in the last 12 months (n=16,317)

MARKET ANALYSIS – BUSINESS EVENTS

Until mid-2019, the business events market was quantified through a survey of more than 300 professional conferencing and meeting venues in New Zealand.

Participating venues were those that regularly hosted meetings, incentives, conferences and exhibitions (MICE events) and included major hotel chains, convention and exhibition centres and other specialist venue providers.

Run by MBIE, the survey was undertaken in partnership with 14 Convention Bureaux around New Zealand (including the bureau in Wellington).

In the year ending June 2019, Wellington's share of the business events market – measured by total delegate days - was 21%.

Business events activity in Wellington included: -

- 5,381 single day events
- 1,618 multi-day events
- 709,720 delegates
- Almost 1 million (963,858) delegate days.

It is assumed that Lower Hutt's share of the regional market is relatively small but that there is scope to grow share with greater focus on the business events market. Just 5% of the regional market (as it stood in 2019) would deliver a total of 350 single/multi-day events, 35,000 delegates and almost 50,000 delegate days per annum.

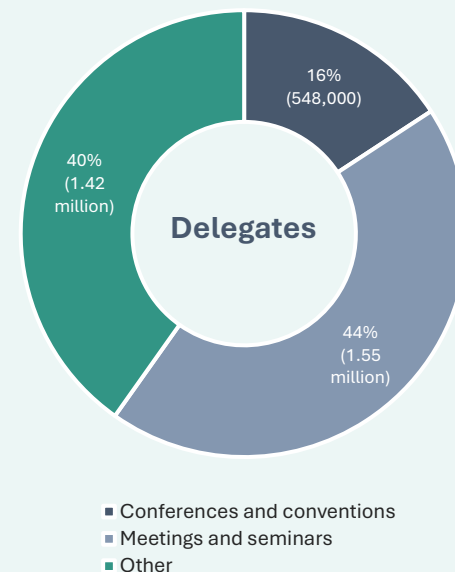
Importantly, business events are generally distributed throughout the year (excluding December-February), providing consistent year-round business for host communities.

BUSINESS EVENTS YE JUNE 2019 ¹

46,900 events

3.49 million delegates

4.64 million delegate days



¹ Business Events Activity Survey, Ministry of Business, Innovation & Employment, YE June 2019

MARKET ANALYSIS – KEY TRENDS

Technology

Artificial intelligence is emerging as a disrupter and enabler: revolutionising event planning and delivery, enabling delivery of personalised experiences, enhancing engagement via immersive experiences, supporting delivery of hybrid events (combining in-person and virtual elements).

Sustainability

No longer a question of compliance, sustainability is increasingly a business priority. In response to demand from consumers and other stakeholders, event organisers are embedding measures to eliminate waste, limit carbon emissions, amplify social, economic and environmental impacts, and evaluate event impacts.

Changing artist preferences

Live performance artists are prioritising limited run stadium tours and ‘residencies’ over extended touring schedules and music festivals. This is impacting the pipeline of performance opportunities (and career pathways) for new and emerging artists, and reducing event opportunities overall.

Data-driven decision-making

Event organisers and promoters are increasingly leveraging data to assess attendee engagement, optimise event delivery, and demonstrate return on investment (ROI).

Inclusive events

Ensuring events are inclusive – by accommodating diverse audiences and enhancing accessibility – is an increasing focus for event planners (and expectation of event consumers).

Changing consumer preferences

Consumers are prioritising events that **connect**, **transform** and **engage**: smaller and more intimate events, participation events, events that connect attendees with a ‘community of interest’, events that deliver experiences which are truly transformative in nature, and events that contribute to personal growth and wellbeing. Live performance and entertainment events continue to resonate with the market, and especially with younger audiences.

Cost pressures

Inflation and cost-of-living pressures are increasing costs for event organisers and promoters, and impacting consumer demand. Event organisers and promoters are looking to fewer, smaller or shorter events – and touring schedules – to maintain engagement while achieving an acceptable ROI. Consumers are making choices.

Compliance and complexity

Event organisers are struggling to navigate what they see as the increasing complexity of the regulatory environment. Some are simply choosing not to try.

Post-pandemic, there is also a heightened focus on health and safety to ensure attendee wellbeing. This is influencing all aspects of event planning and execution (including venue selection).

Experience-driven events, and those that feature an interactive format – for example, incorporating gamification, workshops, and immersive experiences to foster deeper participant involvement – are growing in popularity.

Organisers are choosing venues that cater for these changing event needs, while offering flexible spaces that can be adapted to different event formats.

COMPARATOR REGION STRATEGIES

To gather insights on common practice, and strategic concepts for Hutt City Council to consider, a review was completed of events strategies in regions thought to have similar challenges and/or characteristics to Lower Hutt (e.g., proximity to major population centres, proximity to key transport hubs, population size, core infrastructure).

The regions selected for review were Hastings, Taranaki, Whangārei and Rotorua in New Zealand, and Wollongong (NSW) and Yarra Valley and Dandenong Ranges (Victoria) in Australia.

A summary of each plan/strategy is appended (refer to pages 19-24) and key themes are summarised here.

- Events drive tourism and economic development.
- ‘Signature’ or ‘anchor’ events shape regional identity.
- Year-round event programming reduces seasonality of impacts.
- Successful events are developed from within (i.e. involve local people; build on local creative, natural and community assets; have genuine connection to ‘place’).
- Strong community support and cultural alignment are critical to event success (focusing on local heritage, iwi partnerships, and co-design of initiatives adds authenticity and fosters pride).
- Investment in venues, transport, and accommodation is essential (and requires solid partnerships).
- A streamlined and well-supported event approvals and facilitation process is essential to successful event planning and execution.
- Marketing support is critical (effective digital marketing, influencer promotion, and cross-regional collaboration are needed to drive visitation).
- A focus on sustainability is a priority (environmental, social, cultural, economic).
- Setting and forgetting is a recipe for disaster: events require ongoing innovation and development to thrive.

Hastings – Positions the region as New Zealand’s premium food and wine destination, expanding seasonal food festivals, farmers’ markets, and Māori cultural tourism to attract domestic and international visitors.

Whangārei – Leverages coastal and marine tourism strengths, focusing on boating, water sports, and conservation events, while positioning itself as an accessible short-break destination for Auckland visitors.

Rotorua – Builds on the region’s cultural and geothermal tourism appeal, developing iwi-led Māori heritage events, outdoor adventure tourism, and wellness experiences to attract diverse visitors.

Taranaki – Positions the region as a hub for arts, music, and outdoor recreation, prioritising multi-day festivals, art trails, and sustainability-focused tourism experiences to drive year-round visitation.

Wollongong – Strengthens its coastal adventure and entertainment appeal, investing in major sporting events, surf competitions, and music festivals, while enhancing event infrastructure for international and community events. Explicitly targets visitors from Sydney and other large urban centres; positioning Wollongong as an easily accessible weekend destination.

Yarra Valley & Dandenong Ranges – Focuses on wine tourism, luxury experiences, and agritourism, developing high-end food festivals, vineyard concerts, and eco-conscious tourism to attract premium travellers. Explicitly targets Melbourne residents, using the concept ‘so close, yet a world away’ to highlight the region’s easy reach, but distinct natural offering.

LOWER HUTT: SWOT ANALYSIS & STRATEGIC INSIGHTS

Feedback gathered from event experts and leading event operators has been used to complete a brief SWOT analysis for Lower Hutt.

This feedback indicates that Lower Hutt currently lacks a clear ‘event USP’ but it does have a range of assets upon which to build a sustainable – and regionally-differentiated – ‘events brand’ going forward.

Notably, these assets include: -

- a wide range of high quality – flat - outdoor venue spaces (often with good parking adjacent);
- a relaxed, accessible, and welcoming atmosphere;
- a range of established and emerging urban trails (cycle, walking) suitable for new participation (sporting/recreational/community) events;
- easy transport links to Wellington City (to connect with airline, ferry, inter-regional bus and rail transport, and accommodation options, and to facilitate travel by event attendees from across the Wellington Region);
- an attractive precinct for business events in the city centre (focused on the Lower Hutt Events Centre and Civic Centre Precinct, with easy access to accommodation, dining and retail options and a range of recreational activities);
- a portfolio of established events, with potential for further growth and development (e.g. Te Rā o te Raukura, Hutt Fest, The Petone Rotary Fair);
- diverse neighbourhoods and community groups from which to foster new cultural and community events that are authentic to Lower Hutt (e.g. marae, cultural groups, craftspeople, Common Unity); and
- a motivated audience for youth-centred live performance, sporting and lifestyle events.

Strengths – venues (especially outdoor venues), central precinct for business events, public transport options, parking options, proximity to Wellington City and transport connections, natural assets, diverse communities.

Weaknesses – limited accommodation infrastructure, gaps/limitations in other event infrastructure, no clear event USP/event brand.

Opportunities – participation events, new multi-cultural/youth/ lifestyle events fostered from within the community, targeted business events, leverage of major Wellington City/other regional events, event ‘concierge’ and/or toolkit to assist event organisers, proactive advice and support for ‘sustainable events’ (considering sustainability ‘in the round’ – economic, social, cultural, environmental).

Threats – economic uncertainty, traffic and other disruption arising from the construction of the RiverLink project, competition from within/outside of the Wellington Region, loss of social licence (i.e. community withdrawing its support for Council involvement in event funding/support).

WELLINGTON REGION EVENTS STRATEGIES/PLANS

WELLINGTON EVENTS PLANS/STRATEGIES – UPPER HUTT

Upper Hutt City : Review of Upper Hutt City Events Strategy (2021-2026)

Goals and Objectives	Focus Areas	Actions	SWOT Analysis
- Driven by the goal of enhancing the city's identity and vibrancy through events that support economic development, community engagement and wellbeing, environmental sustainability and infrastructure and capacity building. - Key objectives are to: expand the events portfolio, enhance Upper Hutt's brand, prioritise environmental stewardship, and develop events with long term impact.	- Signature events - Large and regional events - Community-led events - Leveraging existing assets - Partnerships and collaboration - Sustainability and environmental focus	- Event investment and funding framework; a tiered event funding model that prioritises focus areas. - Capacity building and infrastructure support. - Strategic marketing and brand positioning. - Regional and private sector collaboration. - Sustainability initiatives.	Strengths - strategic location, diverse venues and natural assets, growing community support, balanced event portfolio, partnerships with regional bodies. Weaknesses – limited accommodation capacity, infrastructure gaps, event funding constraints and event branding and visibility. Opportunities - leverage Wellington overflow market, signature event development, Māori and cultural tourism integration, business events, and sustainability leadership. Threats - competition from other regions, economic uncertainty, climate change and extreme weather, community pushback on growth.

WELLINGTON EVENTS PLANS/STRATEGIES – WELLINGTON CITY

Wellington City : Review of Wellington Major Events Strategic Framework (2021)

Goals and Objectives	Focus Areas	Actions	SWOT Analysis
- Position Wellington as a globally-recognised major events destination – contributing to economic growth, city identity and community wellbeing. - Key objectives are to: increase visitation and economic impact, enhance Wellington’s global reputation, improve liveability and community engagement, build a sustainable events sector, and ensure a balanced event calendar.	- Attracting high value major events - Enhancing Wellington’s competitive edge - Delivering a year round events portfolio - Strengthening strategic partnerships - Ensuring sustainability and operational excellence	- Investment and funding criteria which align with key objectives and actions. - The same with respect to decision making criteria for event selection. - Marketing and promotion support. - Collaboration and advocacy. - Measuring impact and continuous improvement.	Strengths - established reputation as an events city, compact and accessible city layout, existing event infrastructure, Government and business support and cultural and creative hub. Weaknesses – weather dependency, accommodation limitations, funding constraints, high competition from other large NZ cities and reliance on central government funding. Opportunities - attracting more international events, developing a signature global event, enhancing digital and hybrid event capabilities and sustainability leadership. Threats - economic downturns and funding reductions, increased competition from other regions, community pushback on large scale events and climate change and environmental concerns.

WELLINGTON EVENTS PLANS/STRATEGIES – KĀPITI

Kāpiti: Review of Kāpiti Major Events Fund Policy (2022), Kāpiti Destination Management Plan (2021), and Kāpiti Economic Development Strategy & Implementation Plan (2020-2023)

Goals and Objectives	Focus Areas	Actions	SWOT Analysis
- Driven by economic, social, cultural and environmental goals that align with broader economic development and tourism growth plans. - Key objectives are to: increase visitor spend and economic impact, develop a balanced event portfolio, position Kāpiti as a recognised event destination, ensure sustainability and cultural authenticity, and leverage regional collaboration.	- Developing signature and major events - Enhancing infrastructure and accessibility - Strengthening cultural and environmental focus - Marketing and brand alignment - Supporting emerging events	- Major events fund allocation. - Destination management and event integration. - Infrastructure and venue investment. - Marketing and visitor attraction strategies. - Event evaluation and long term growth strategy.	Strengths - proximity to Wellington, strong cultural and natural identity, economic development alignment, established major event fund and support from WellingtonNZ and regional collaboration. Weaknesses – limited accommodation and infrastructure, small budget for major events, weather dependency, brand awareness gap. Opportunities – a high profile signature event, leverage Transmission Gully for visitor growth, expand business and conference events, strengthen digital and hybrid event offerings, and position Kāpiti as a sustainability leader in events. Threats - competition from Wellington and other regions, economic uncertainty and funding challenges, potential community resistance and climate change and environmental risk.

WELLINGTON EVENTS PLANS/STRATEGIES – PORIRUA

Porirua: Review of Porirua City Destination Management Plan (2021), Porirua Strategic Priorities (2024), Porirua Event Investment Programme (2024), and Wellington Regional Economic Development Plan (2024)

Goals and Objectives	Focus Areas	Actions	SWOT Analysis
- Driven by economic, social, cultural and environmental priorities, aligning with the city's destination management, community development, and economic growth goals. - Key objectives are to: increase visitor attraction and economic impact, enhance Porirua's identity and destination positioning, support cultural and community-led events, ensure environmental and social responsibility, and collaborate regionally.	- Major events and city branding - Outdoor and adventure tourism events - Community led and inclusive events - Sustainability and environmental awareness - Partnerships and regional collaboration	- Event investment and funding. - Destination management and event alignment. - Infrastructure and venue development. - Marketing and brand awareness. - Sustainability and environmental considerations. - Measuring impact and long term growth strategy.	Strengths - proximity to Wellington, strong cultural and community identity, growing adventure and outdoor appeal, diverse and engaged community, existing event infrastructure. Weaknesses – limited accommodation and hospitality infrastructure, brand awareness gap, weather dependency and event funding limitations. Opportunities – a high profile signature event, leverage Wellington visitor overflow, strengthen business and conference events, sustainability leadership. Threats - competition from other Wellington region cities, economic uncertainty and funding risks and potential community pushback on large events.

WELLINGTON EVENTS PLANS/STRATEGIES – WAIRARAPA

Wairarapa: Review of Wairarapa Destination Management Plan (2021), Wairarapa Economic Development Strategy (and supporting documents from Masterton, Carterton and South Wairarapa District Councils)

Goals and Objectives	Focus Areas	Actions	SWOT Analysis
- The Wairarapa Event Strategy is broadly intended to support regional economic development, tourism growth, and community engagement through events. - Key objectives are to: increase visitor attraction and economic impact, strengthen Wairarapa's event identity, support cultural and lwi-led events, enhance seasonal event offerings, and ensure sustainability and community support.	- Wine, food and agritourism events - Dark skies and nature based tourism events - Cultural and Māori storytelling events - Event seasonality - Regional spread - Strategic partnerships and funding alignment	- Developing an events strategy and criteria for investment. - Building signature and themed events. - Infrastructure and venue investment. - Marketing and regional collaboration. - Sustainability and regenerative tourism initiatives. - Measuring impact and continuous improvement.	Strengths - proximity to Wellington, established food and wine reputation, rich cultural and natural heritage (Māori and European), existing dark skies and outdoor tourism potential and collaborative regional approach. Weaknesses – limited accommodation and transport infrastructure, event seasonality challenges, limited awareness beyond Wellington, and reliance on public funding. Opportunities – expand event seasonality and geographic distribution, develop a signature event with national appeal, strengthen digital and international marketing, increase private sector sponsorship and investment, and position Wairarapa as a sustainability leader in events. Threats - competition from Wellington and other regions, economic and climate risks, and community resistance to large scale events.

COMPARATOR REGION EVENTS STRATEGIES/PLANS

NZ REGIONAL EVENTS PLANS/STRATEGIES - TARANAKI

Taranaki : Review of the 2020-2030 Taranaki Regional Events Strategy

Goals and Objectives	Priorities and Actions	Leveraging Proximity to Larger Urban Centres	SWOT Analysis	Trends Identified
Aims to position Taranaki as New Zealand’s leading regional events destination by 2030. The overarching goal is to enhance the region’s reputation, attract visitors and investment, and ensure long-term viability. Key objectives are to: attract more visitors, showcase and promote Taranaki, enhance quality of life, and broaden the benefits of the programme.	The strategy is structured around four strategic priorities: • Event infrastructure • Event programme • Event funding • Event Capability Actions include leveraging natural assets, targeting more mass participation and cultural events, increasing MICE (Meetings, Incentives, Conferences and Exhibitions) opportunities and securing sponsorship and investment.	The strategy acknowledges the need to attract visitors from major centres. While Taranaki lacks the population density of metropolitan areas, it emphasises: • Proximity to larger cities as a key advantage for visitor attraction. • Expanding transport connectivity and accommodation options. • Event clustering and cross-regional partnerships to draw in visitors. • Using events to showcase lifestyle and economic opportunities, encouraging relocation and investment.	Strengths – strong local engagement, successful existing events, iconic venues and collaboration. Weaknesses – infrastructure constraints, seasonal skew and funding challenges. Opportunities – increased focus on experiences, targeted marketing, MICE market expansion and new partnerships. Threats – identifying competition, economic uncertainty, changing consumer behaviour.	• Growth in experience based tourism. • Rising demand for sustainability. • Shifts in audience demographics. • Increased competition for event hosting. • Growing importance of MICE events.

NZ REGIONAL EVENTS PLANS/STRATEGIES - ROTORUA

Rotorua : Review of the Rotorua Event Strategy to 2030

Goals and Objectives	Priorities and Actions	Leveraging Proximity to Larger Urban Centres	SWOT Analysis	Trends Identified
Aims to transform Rotorua into a leading events destination guided by four primary outcomes: 1. Economic growth 2. Build Brand Rotorua 3. Engaging the community 4. Enabling sector development	The strategy introduces a three-tiered investment framework, plus additional low level support. Other key initiatives include: • Venue policy updates. • Stronger event sales and bidding processes. • A new impact measurement tool. • Marketing and branding requirements.	The strategy actively targets: • Domestic markets – attracting visitors from Auckland, Wellington, and other North Island cities. • International visitors – positioning Rotorua as a world-class destination for Māori cultural, geothermal, and outdoor experiences. • Business travellers – expanding business events and corporate conferences. • Regional engagement – encouraging participation from Bay of Plenty, Waikato, and wider North Island communities..	Strengths – Established event infrastructure, unique brand proposition, existing event reputation and strong tourism appeal. Weaknesses – Over reliance on sports events, lack of a signature event, funding limitations, and challenges in community engagement. Opportunities – diversifying the event portfolio, strengthening partnerships, expanding business events and developing a globally recognised signature event. Threats – competition from other destinations, sustainability challenges, economic uncertainties and changing consumer behaviour.	• Greater focus on cultural authenticity • Diversification beyond sports events • Sustainability and carbon neutrality • Experience-driven events • Digital engagement

NZ REGIONAL EVENTS PLANS/STRATEGIES - WHANGĀREI

Whangārei : Review of the Whangārei Events Strategy 2019-2024

Goals and Objectives	Priorities and Actions	Leveraging Proximity to Larger Urban Centres	SWOT Analysis	Trends Identified
Aims to redefine events as “local experiences’ that strengthen community identity, increase participation, and amplify the unique value of Whangārei. The strategy is built around three key outcomes: 1. Local confidence 2. Local capability expertise 3. Local connection Positions Whangārei as a place of unique local experiences.	• Creating an "Experience Local" framework. • Strengthening Manaakitanga (hospitality and hosting) as a guiding principle. • Improving sector collaboration and coordinating event planning. • Enhancing sustainability practices and reducing event waste. • Leveraging emerging opportunities, such as cruise tourism and new cultural attraction.	The strategy recognises Whangārei’s proximity to Auckland as an opportunity to attract: • Day-trippers and weekend visitors • Cruise tourists • Event attendees from Auckland and Northland Key initiatives supporting this include: • Developing destination-defining events. • Targeted marketing and collaboration with Auckland-based tourism and event stakeholders. • Enhancing infrastructure and transport connectivity.	Strengths – authentic local identity, natural and cultural assets, successful recent investments and active and engaged local populations. Weaknesses – lack of a well defined event identity, limited accommodation options, siloed event sector and perception challenges. Opportunities – capitalising on new attractions, developing a signature event, leveraging digital marketing and story telling and expanding regional partnerships. Threats – competition from other destinations, economic uncertainties, environmental concerns and infrastructure limitations.	• Experience-driven events. • Sustainability and regenerative events. • Increased use of technology. • Growing popularity of boutique and cultural events. • Hybrid and remote-friendly events.

NZ REGIONAL EVENTS PLANS/STRATEGIES – HASTINGS/HAWKE’S BAY

Hastings/Hawke’s Bay : Review of Hastings Toi-tū Strategy, Hawke’ Bay Visitor Strategy and Hastings Arts and Event Plan

Goals and Objectives	Priorities and Actions	Leveraging Proximity to Larger Urban Centres	SWOT Analysis	Trends Identified
All three documents align with a broader vision of economic, cultural and social growth in Hawke’s Bay. Toi-tū is a strategic framework to support and uplift the arts, culture, and creative sectors in Hastings, emphasising cultural identity, economic value, environmental sustainability, and social inclusion, and seeking to position Hastings as a creative hub both nationally and internationally. Key objectives are to: • Celebrate cultural identity • Strengthen the creative economy • Sustainability and place-making • Increase access and participation • Build networks and connections	• Creative sector investment • Partnership development • Place-making initiatives • Education and mentorship	All three strategies explicitly recognise Hastings’ (Hawke’s Bay’s) proximity to major urban centres and plan to leverage this advantage. • Hawke’s Bay Visitor Strategy prioritises Wellington, Auckland, and Manawatū/Whanganui as key visitor markets. • The Toi-tū Strategy aligns with tourism efforts by integrating arts and heritage into the visitor experience.	Strengths – The region’s reputation, cultural and heritage assets, growing event portfolio and regional collaboration. Weaknesses – seasonal dependencies, limited accommodation capacity, funding constraints and skills shortages. Opportunities – growth in domestic tourism, sustainable and regenerative tourism, cycling and outdoor recreation and festival and event expansion. Threats – competition from other regions, economic downturns, climate change and environmental risks and community resistance to tourism growth.	• Experience-Driven Tourism. • Sustainability & Regenerative Tourism. • Cultural Tourism & Authenticity. • Year-Round Events & Destination Development. • Event-Driven Economic Growth. • Creative Economy & Arts Integration.

AUSTRALIAN REGIONAL EVENTS PLANS/STRATEGIES – WOLLONGONG (NSW)

A Review of the Wollongong Major Events Strategy 2021-2026

Goals and Objectives	Priorities and Actions	Leveraging Proximity to Larger Urban Centres	SWOT Analysis	Trends Identified
Aims to establish Wollongong as a leading destination. The key goals include: • Driving economic growth. • Enhancing Wollongong's reputation. • Strengthening the event sector's capacity. • Building a diverse and sustainable event portfolio. • Securing another global event. The strategy is structured around four key pillars: • Global Vision. • Portfolio Growth. • Legacy and Leverage. • Event Capacity Building. The strategy also aims to shift perceptions of Wollongong from an industrial city to a vibrant, progressive events destination.	It is thought these goals will be achieved by: • Investing in event acquisition. • Developing a tiered event classification system, prioritising global, signature, and regional events. • Strengthening partnerships. • Improving event infrastructure and regulatory processes. Key initiatives include: • Targeting five priority event sectors. • Developing a tiered investment model. • Building strategic partnerships. • Enhancing infrastructure and approvals.	The strategy explicitly targets visitors from Sydney and other large urban centres. Key approaches include: • Easily accessible weekend destination for Sydney residents. • "Forced Tourism" approach – using major events as a catalyst to attract first-time visitors who might not have considered Wollongong otherwise. • Marketing partnerships with Sydney-based event organisers • Targeting short-stay and weekend traveller. Wollongong also competes with Geelong, Newcastle, and the Sunshine Coast for major events but faces funding constraints compared to these regions.	Strengths – proximity to Sydney and Canberra, existing event success, diverse natural and build assets, strategic event approvals process and growing brand appeal. Weaknesses – funding constraints, accommodation shortages, perceived industrial legacy, and event site sustainability issues. Opportunities – capitalising on UCI Bike City status, developing a flagship food and beverage festival, expanding adventure and endurance events, building long term event partnerships and attracting business and midweek events. Threats – intense competition from other regional cities, infrastructure limitations, economic uncertainties, and community pushback on large events.	• Experience-based tourism growth. • Sustainability and environmental considerations. • Hybrid events and digital engagement. • Rise of cycling and adventure sports. • Growth of food and beverage festivals. • Demand for mid-week and off-peak events.

AUSTRALIAN REGIONAL EVENTS PLANS/STRATEGIES – YARRA VALLEY & DANDENONG RANGES (VIC)

A Review of the Yarra Valley and Dandenong Ranges Event Strategy (2024-2028)

Goals and Objectives	Priorities and Actions	Leveraging Proximity to Larger Urban Centres	SWOT Analysis	Trends Identified
Aims to position the region as a nationally recognised specialist event destination by developing signature events, increasing overnight visitor expenditure, building a year-round events calendar, strengthening the local creative and tourism industries and enhancing regional identity and reputation. The four key goals are to drive economic growth, ignite a year round events calendar, showcase the destination, and to inspire the creative community.	Five critical success factors: • Creating a year round calendar of events. • Developing signature events. • Establishing an events friendly destination. • Growing return on investment • Featuring home grown events.	The strategy explicitly targets Melbourne and nearby urban centres as key source markets. It emphasises: • "So Close, Yet a World Away" – highlighting the region's easy access while offering a distinct natural escape. • Attracting weekend visitors and converting them into overnight guests. • Encouraging business events and incentive travel, which align with Melbourne's corporate sector. • Partnering with Visit Victoria and Tourism Australia to enhance regional branding and exposure.	Strengths – established event reputation, strong tourism appeal, proximity to Melbourne, diverse event spaces and community engagement. Weaknesses – seasonal concentration, day trip dominance, infrastructure gap, event resourcing issues and regulatory challenges. Opportunities – targeting mid-week and off peak markets, developing unique signature events, growing partnerships, business event expansion and leveraging digital and influencer marketing. Threats – increasing competition, economic uncertainty, environmental concerns and changing travel behaviours.	• High-Value, Smaller-Scale Events. • Experience-Based Tourism. • Mid-Week and Business Events Growth. • Digital and Content Sustainability and Authenticity.

RESOURCES

RESOURCES – LOCAL CONTEXT

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WNZ Destination Management Plan

<https://wellingtonnz.bynder.com/m/673d9a3ed65dbcbc/original/Destination-Management-Plan.pdf>

WNZ Regional Economic Development Plan – 2024 Refresh

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<https://www.wellingtonnz.com/major-events>

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<https://www.wellingtonnz.com/about-us/strategies-and-publications>

Wairarapa Final – DMP

<https://rtnz.org.nz/rto-destination-wairarapa/>

<https://rtnz.org.nz/wp-content/uploads/2022/10/Final-DMP.pdf>

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<https://www.thrivewairarapa.nz/about>

Masterton District Council Community Events Fund

<https://www.mstn.govt.nz/community/community-grants/community-events-fund>

<https://www.mstn.govt.nz/community/events/organise-an-event/planning-your-event>

South Wairarapa District Council – Running a Public Event

<https://swdc.govt.nz/services/event-management/>

Carterton Events Centre

<https://www.cartertonec.co.nz/our-story/>

Kapiti Major Events Fund / Policy / Key Council Events

<https://www.kapiticoast.govt.nz/services/grants-and-funding/kapiti-major-events-fund/>

<https://www.kapiticoast.govt.nz/media/1zljx0o/major-events-fund-policy-2022.pdf>

<https://www.kapiticoast.govt.nz/explore-kapiti/things-to-do-in-kapiti/key-council-events/>

Kapiti Destination Management Plan

<https://www.kapiticoast.govt.nz/media/rynbxrss/kapiti-destination-management-plan.pdf>

Kapiti-eds-Implementation Plan 2020-23

<https://www.kapiticoast.govt.nz/media/y2vf1jmc/eds-implementation-plan-2020-2023.pdf>

Porirua Event Investment Programme

<https://poriruacity.govt.nz/services/community-support/event-funding-and-sponsorship/>

Porirua Event Funding and Sponsorship

<https://poriruacity.govt.nz/services/community-support/event-funding-and-sponsorship/>

Upper Hutt City Council Events Strategy 2021-2026

<https://www.upperhutt.govt.nz/files/assets/public/v/1/uhcc-events-strategy.pdf>

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eventsair.com

Cvent – 9 Event Trends that Will Shape 2025

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Eventify – 15 Key Event Trends Shaping the Industry in 2025

[Eventify](https://eventify.com)

Imagina – The 7 Key Event Trends in 2025

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Cvent – Event Industry Report 2025 – Australia and New Zealand Edition

eglobaltravelmedia.com.au

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<https://www.cvent.com/en/resource/platform/2025-meetings-and-events-trends>

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<https://eventex.co/events-industry-trends-report-2025>

BEIA – MEETINGS National Tradeshow

<https://www.beia.co.nz/beia-events-and-programmes/meetings>

The Business Research Company - Global Events Industry Market Report for 2025 Size and Outlook

<https://www.thebusinessresearchcompany.com/report/events-industry-global-market-report>

TTG Mice - new-zealand-business-events-sector-celebrates-nz3-million-funding-boost

<https://www.ttg mice.com/2025/03/12/new-zealand-business-events-sector-celebrates-nz3-million-funding-boost/>

Travel and Tour World – Meetings 2025 Set to Break Records ...

<https://www.travelandtourworld.com/news/article/meetings-2025-set-to-break-records-as-new-zealand-leading-business-events-showcase-returns-to-auckland/>

Business Insider – 5 Reasons why live music stays thriving during recessions

<https://www.businessinsider.com/recession-indicator-outlook-concerts-live-music-economy-ticket-sales-spending-2025-3>

Tourism New Zealand – Tourism NZ 2024-25 Strategy and FY25 Focus

<https://www.tourismnewzealand.com/assets/about/publications/Strategy-overviews/Tourism-New-Zealand-2024-2028-Strategy-Overview.pdf>

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Agorify – Reputable Event Industry Experts Sharing Industry Predictions

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Encore – 25 Top Creative Event Ideas and Trends for 2025

<https://www.encore-anzpac.com/25-top-creative-event-ideas-and-trends-for-2025>

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BizBash – 9 Top Event Trends to Look for in 2025

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Whangarei Events Strategy 2019-2024

<https://www.wdc.govt.nz/files/assets/public/documents/council/strategies/events-strategy.pdf>

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