



Events Strategy Engagement Report

March 2025



Contents

- 1 Executive Summary 3
- 2 Introduction..... 4
 - 2.1 What is the Events Strategy?..... 4
 - 2.2 How we engaged 4
 - 2.3 Who we heard from 5
- 3 What we heard.....7
 - 3.1 Individual, community groups, businesses and public sector partner responses.....7
 - 3.2 Individual and community group responses.....11
 - 3.3 Business owners and operators’ responses 15
 - 3.4 Public sector partners responses 18
 - 3.5 Event promoter responses 21
- 4 What next? 23

1 Executive Summary

We engaged early with our communities, businesses, and the events industry to help shape a new Hutt City Council Events Strategy. Over 120 responses were reviewed and analysed in this Engagement Report.

This report provides the detailed responses from our four identified stakeholder groups highlighting priorities, desired outcomes, and actions for Council. These insights have been utilised to draft the strategy that will soon be available for public consultation. You are invited to review the comprehensive analysis of our preliminary engagement within this document. Below is a high-level summary of the feedback received and the steps being taken to incorporate it into our strategy:

YOU SAID ...

Priorities are:

- Supporting business & economy
- Promoting community inclusion & diversity
- Encourage youth & family participation
- Attract visitors to the area

It's important that events:

- Strengthen local economy
- Enhance the city's reputation
- Collaborate with business & organisations
- Enhance community pride & identity
- Encourage social connections
- Improve accessibility & inclusivity

HCC role should be:

- Promoting & marketing
- Help streamline processes for organisers
- Partnering with organisations & business
- Provide funding or grants to community events
- Supporting grass-roots & community events

You like:

- Community markets
- Cultural celebrations
- Arts & craft fairs
- Food & drink festivals
- Music festivals
- Sports events

WE ARE ...

Drafting an events strategy that:

Focuses on partnerships and collaborating to foster the creation of memorable experiences that enhance economic, social and cultural wellbeing

Setting goals that:

- Support local businesses & economy growth
- Attract visitors to the area
- Promote community inclusivity & diversity
- Encourage youth & family participation

Developing actions plans that:

- Improve marketing & promotion of events
- Make it easier to navigate red tape
- Partner with key stakeholders to secure regular/multi year events
- Communicate funding opportunities
- Work with Mana Whenua & communities groups to support events that reflect diverse culture
- Develop an event calendar to improve inclusivity and opportunities to participate
- Identify channels for communication with diverse groups
- Utilise engagement insights to target popular events

2 Introduction

2.1 What is the Events Strategy?

- 2.1.1 Hutt City Council Events Strategy outlines our goals, outcomes, and action plans to be implemented over a set period for supporting and facilitating the delivery of events in our city. An effective events strategy will not only enhance the vibrancy and appeal of a city or community but can also foster a sense of belonging and pride among residents. Events can contribute significantly to the local economy by stimulating business growth, increasing visitation and spending, and generating employment opportunities. By supporting the creation of memorable experiences, our events strategy will help to build a stronger, more connected community.
- 2.1.2 To achieve our desired social, cultural and economic wellbeing outcomes it is important that our strategy reflects the ambition of event promoters and the preferences of our communities. Through our early engagement with stakeholders, we have gained insights and feedback that have helped shape the Events Strategy, 2025 – 2034.

2.2 How we engaged

- 2.2.1 To help inform our Events Strategy we engaged early with stakeholders and interested parties to collect insights and feedback. We identified the following four groups as key stakeholders:
- Individuals and community groups
 - Local businesses
 - Public sector partners
 - Event promoters and organisations
- 2.2.2 Surveys were designed for each of our stakeholder groups. We promoted participation through direct contact, social media, digital and print communications (Hutt News Advertorial), and key contacts. The surveys were accessible via Council's Have Your Say web page.
- 2.2.3 We received over 120 responses and have analysed the feedback and summarised key themes. The purpose of this document is to report our early engagement feedback.

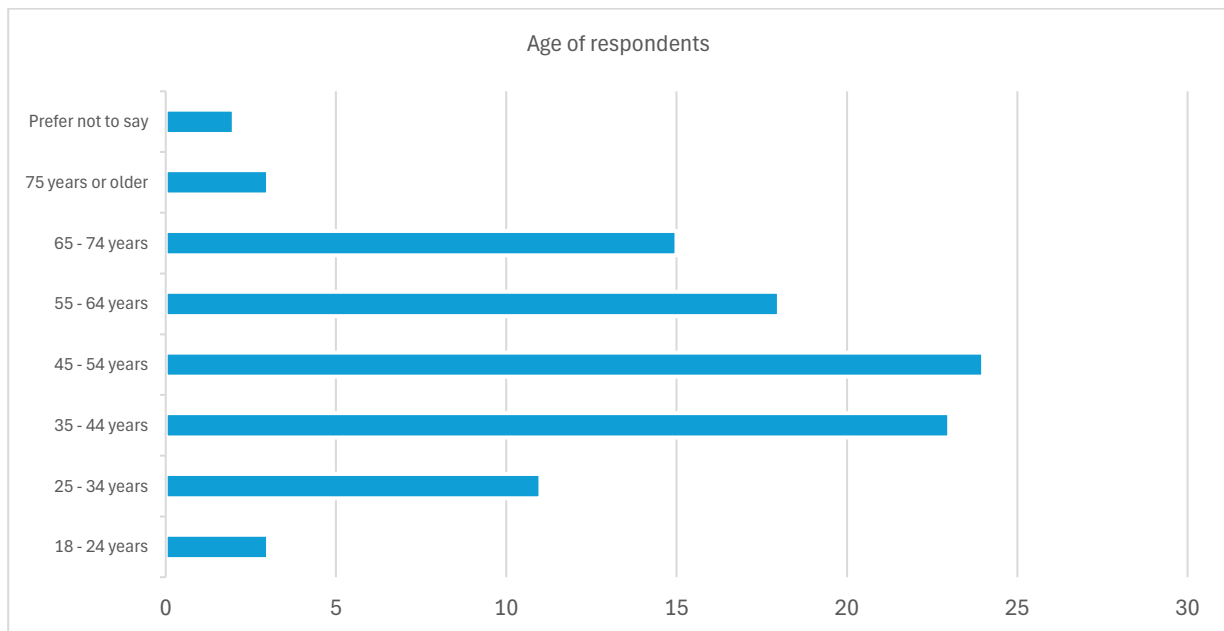
2.2.4 It is important to acknowledge the limitations of our engagement. Whilst we utilised common social media platforms and made direct contact with stakeholders to encourage participation, the number of responses remains relatively low, particularly from businesses and event promoters. The distribution of responses from our four identified stakeholder groups was:

	Responses
Individuals/Community Groups	100
Businesses	9
Public Sector Partners	4
Event Promoters	11
	124

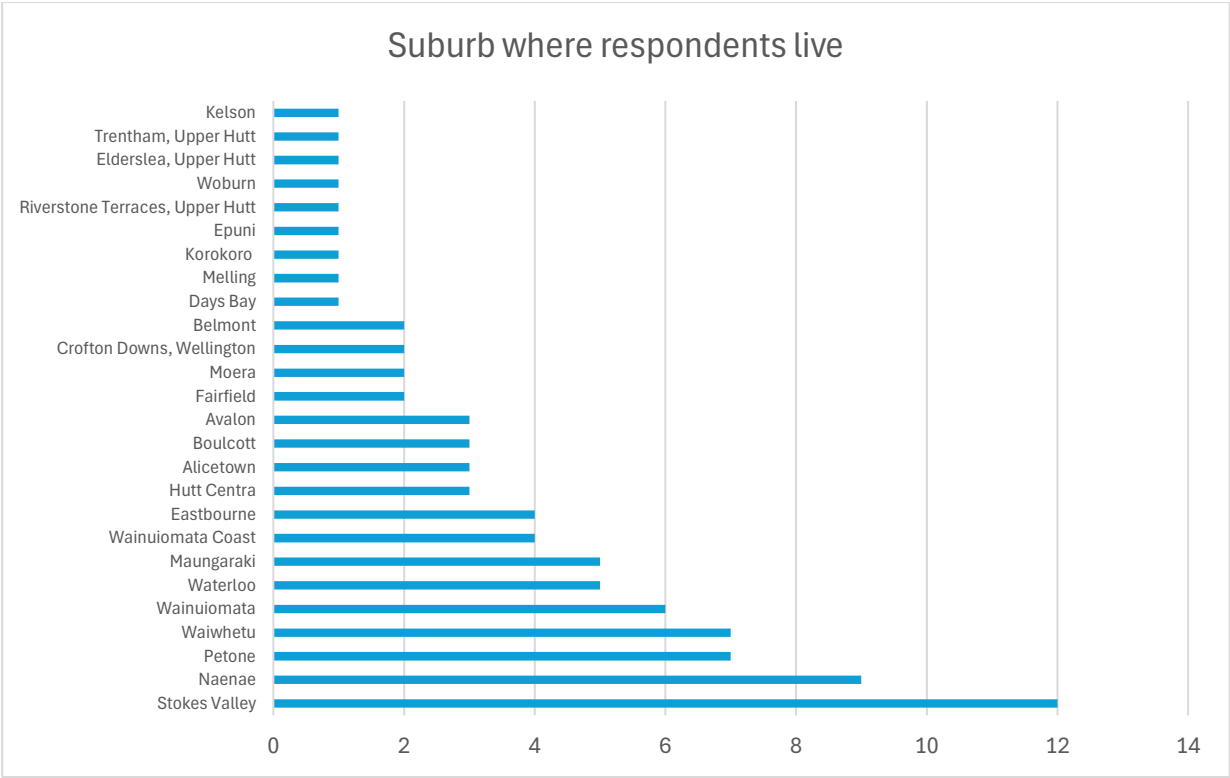
2.3 Who we heard from

2.3.1 Our surveys of individuals and community groups included questions relating to demographics.

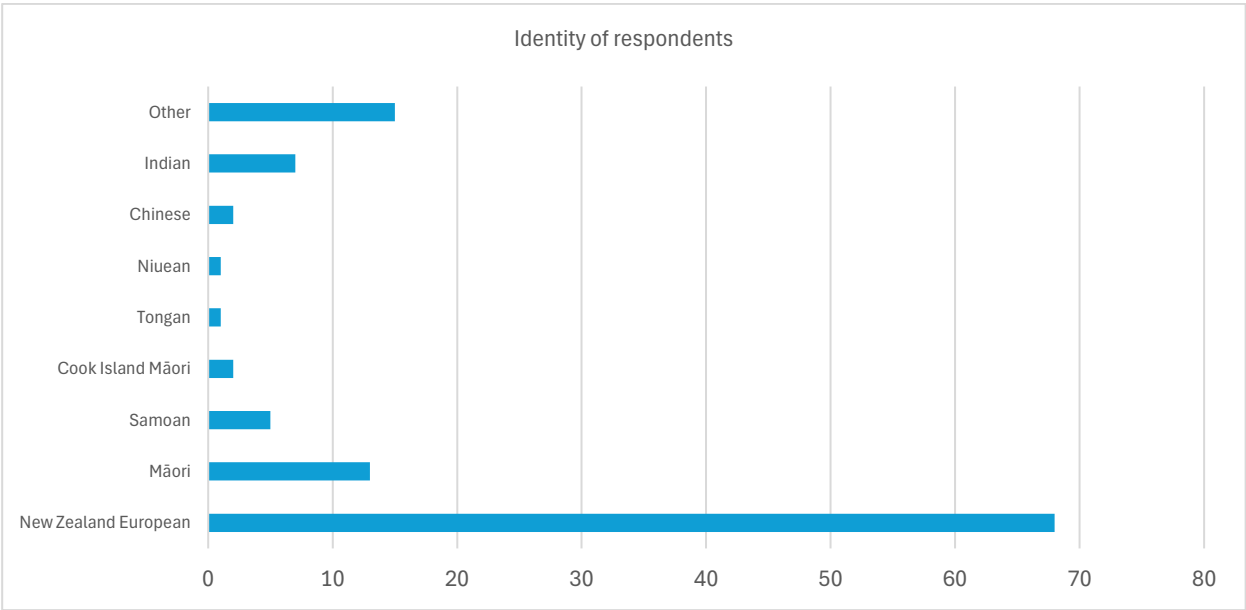
2.3.2 The greatest number of responses were received from adults between 35 – 54 years of age. All age ranges, except under 18-year-olds, were represented in the responses.



2.3.3 Many respondents live in Stokes Valley and Naenae. The responses also include representation from across the Hutt Valley, with some from residents of Upper Hutt.



2.3.4 New Zealand European’s made up the highest proportion of respondents, but a range of ethnic groups were represented in the total responses, including 13% Māori.



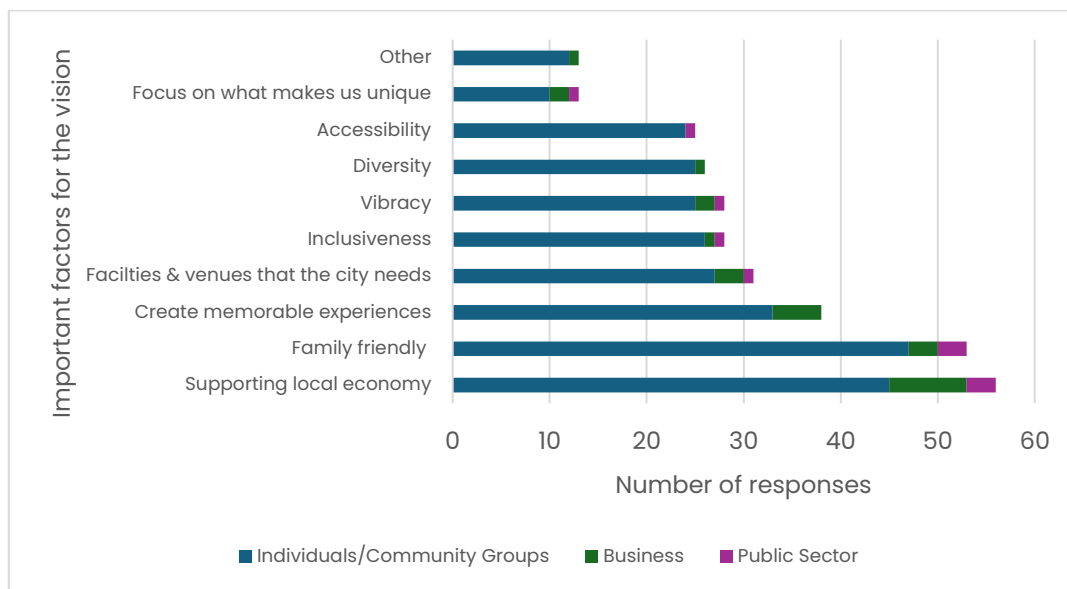
3 What we heard

The intention of this document is to report the insights and feedback received in response to Council's early engagement relating to the new Events Strategy. This section reports responses to those questions that were common to the individual and community groups, businesses, and public sector partners surveys (section 3.1). It also reports the responses to questions that were specific to each of these stakeholder groups (sections 3.2, 3.3 and 3.4). Responses from event promoters are reported in section 3.5. These responses have helped shape the strategy and provided useful information to enable the development of action plans.

3.1 Individual, community groups, businesses and public sector partner responses

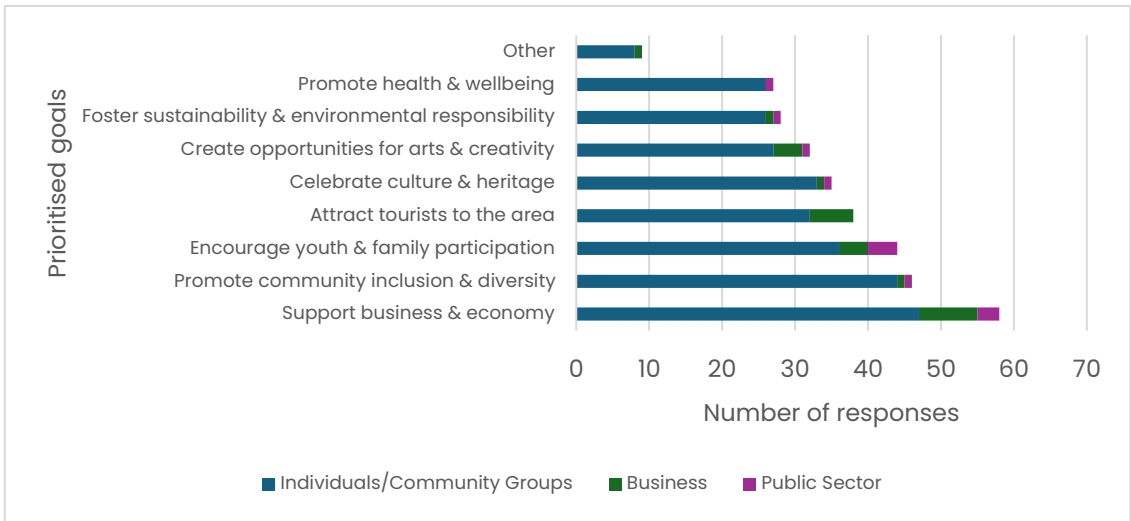
3.1.1 This section of the report provides an overview of responses from common questions to individuals and community groups, businesses, and public sector partners.

Q – If you were to develop a vision for the future of events in our city, what are the most important things you would like to see included?



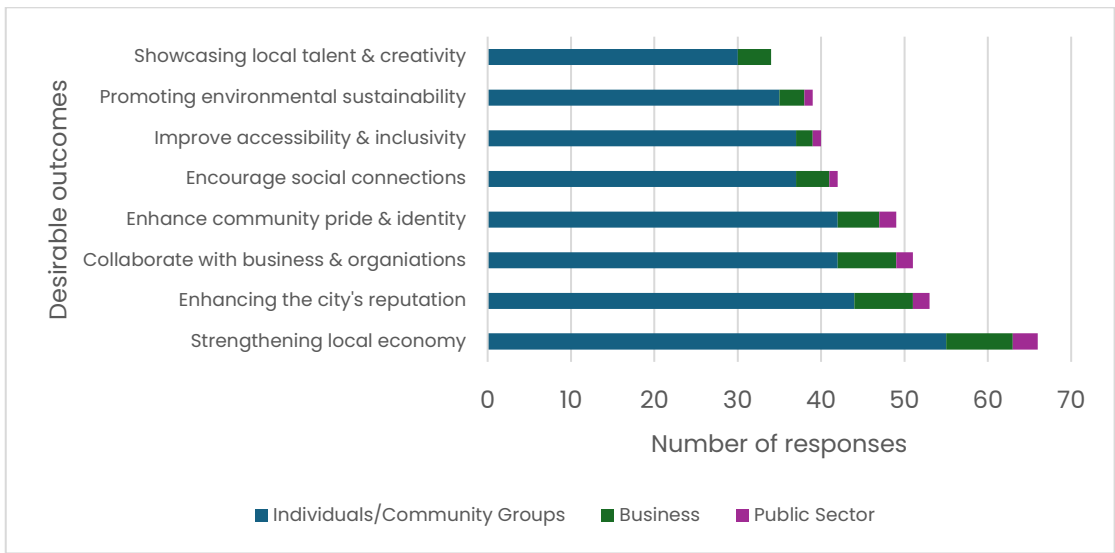
3.1.2 The most important factors identified for our vision included supporting the local economy, family friendly atmosphere, and creating memorable experiences.

Q – What goals should Hutt City Council prioritise for its events strategy?



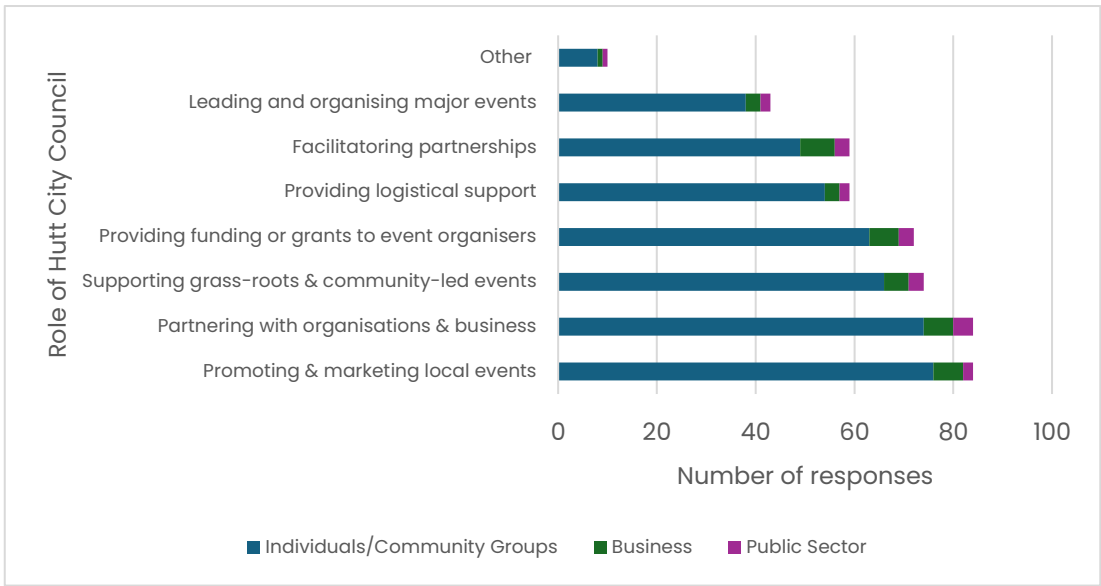
3.1.3 In response to the question about priority goals, the most common goals identified were supporting businesses and economy, promoting inclusion and diversity, encouraging youth and family participation and attracting tourists to the area. These goals have been translated into our strategy.

Q – How important is it to you that events contribute to



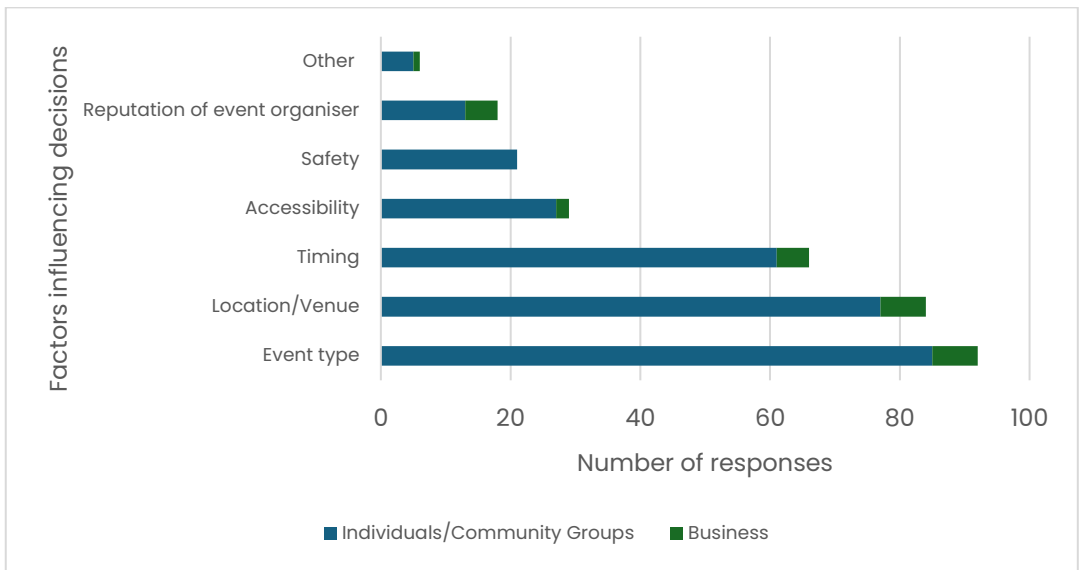
3.1.4 The most common responses to our question about desirable outcomes included a mix of social, cultural and economic factors. Strengthening the local economy and collaborating with businesses were identified as two important outcomes, as well as enhancing the city's reputation, community pride and identity.

Q – What role do you see Hutt City Council playing in supporting events?



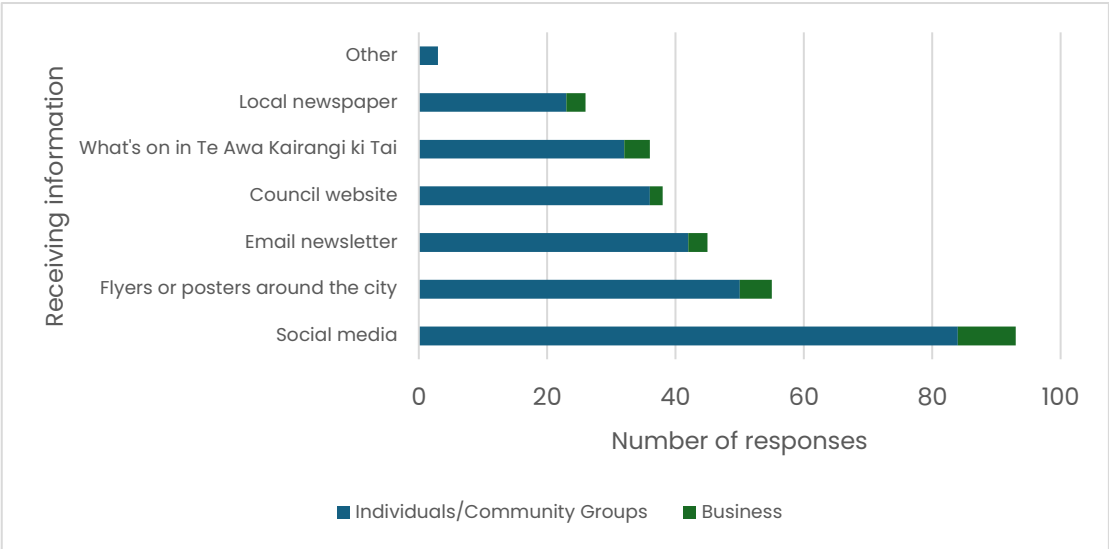
3.1.5 Participants in these surveys identified promoting and marketing local events and partnering with organisations and businesses as two key roles for Hutt City Council in supporting events. The proportion of responses to each of the potential roles was similar across all three stakeholder groups.

Q – What factors most influence your decision to attend an event in Lower Hutt?



3.1.6 From the responses it is evident that the type of event, location/venue, and timing have the most significant influence on decisions to attend an event.

Q – How would you prefer to receive information about upcoming events in Lower Hutt?

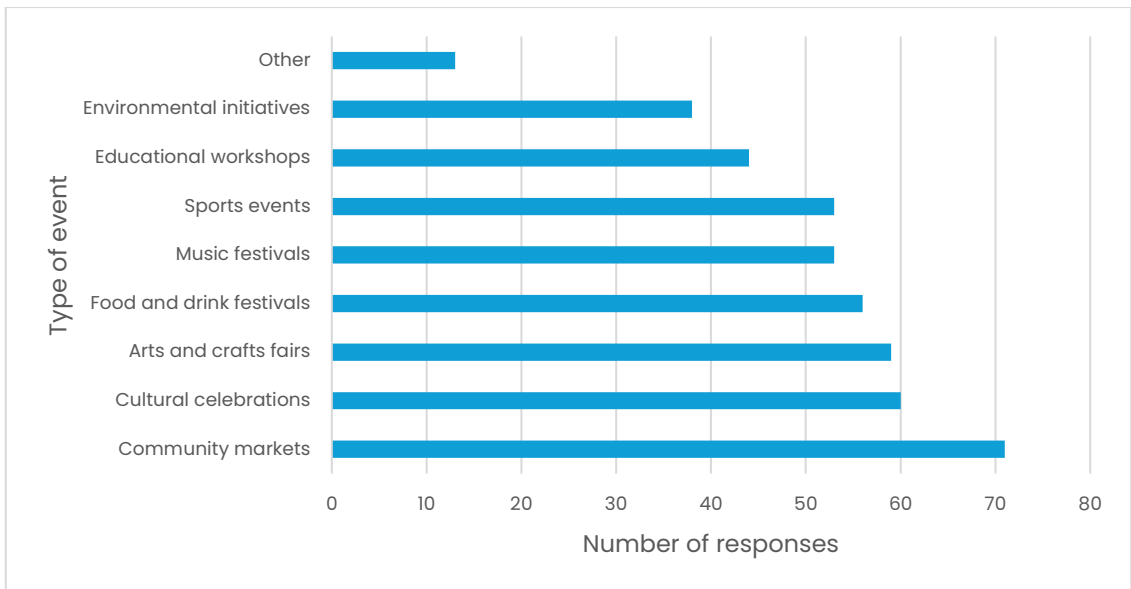


3.1.7 The responses indicate that social media is the significantly preferred means of receiving information about upcoming events. Given the number of responses received it will be important for the Events Strategy to consider how to engage with harder to reach communities.

3.2 Individual and community group responses

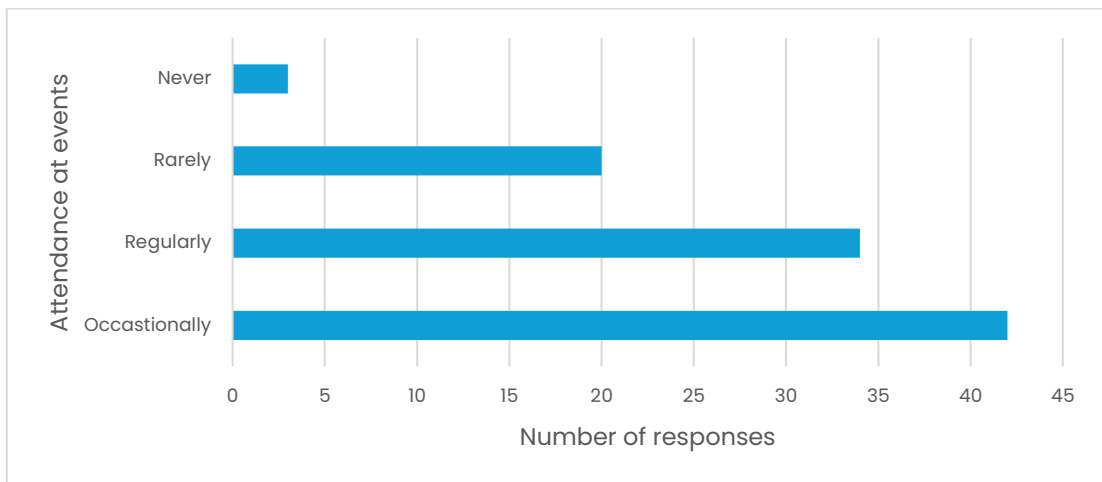
3.2.1 The following insights and feedback are from questions that were specific to the individual and community groups survey.

Q – What type of events do you enjoy attending?



3.2.2 The responses indicate that people enjoy a broad range of events in our city with most identified event types receiving a relatively high number of votes. Community markets register as the most popular type of event that people enjoy attending. Given that the surveys were not completed by anyone under 18 years old, it will be important for the strategy to consider how we achieve the prioritised goal of youth and family participation.

Q – How often do you attend events in Lower Hutt?



Q – What made an event you attended in the past memorable?

1. Community spirit and connection – events fostering a sense of belonging and pride were highly appreciated, particularly those that celebrate diverse cultures and bring people together.
2. Cultural diversity and inclusivity – events that highlighted cultural diversity and inclusivity resonated strongly with the community.
3. Accessibility and convenience – accessibility in terms of location, parking, and facilities was an important factor for positive experiences.

"Seeing friends, and other community members at the events, seeing activities from back home happening here."

"Uniqueness, good food, not feeling over-crowded, feeling engaged with the topic."

"Having a glimpse into a different culture."

"Community-led, free entry, cultural experience of kai and performances"

4. Vibe and atmosphere – a positive, lively vibe was repeatedly noted as essential to a memorable experience.
5. Entertainment variety and creativity – well-organised events with diverse entertainment, unique experiences, and creative activities were well-received.

Q – Any other comments regarding the events strategy or future events in Lower Hutt

Respondents of the individuals and community groups survey provided helpful additional comments which have been reviewed and noted under common themes. The comments received have provided positive and constructive feedback which has helped shape our Events Strategy. The key themes and summarises of the comments are:

1. Desire for diverse and regular events

- ❖ Community interest for traditional and seasonal events: there is a strong sentiment for the revival of traditional events, especially Christmas and seasonal festivals.
- ❖ Suggestions for new and inclusive events: the community would like to see new events and activities that involve all age groups and cultures.

- ❖ Call for events that engage local communities: a focus on grassroots events and local partnerships was highlighted.

2. Council's role in event management

- ❖ Concerns about council involvement: there were negative sentiments about the Council's perceived lack of action or facilitation for events.
- ❖ Supporting with processes: the need for Council to streamline processes and support local organisers was emphasised.

3. Accessibility and inclusiveness

- ❖ Focus on accessibility for all: ensuring that events are accessible to individuals with disabilities and neurodivergent communities was noted.
- ❖ Cultural representation and inclusiveness: feedback suggested the need to ensure a broader cultural representation.

4. Marketing and promotion

- ❖ Poor event promotion identified: many participants highlighted issues with the promotion of events, leading to missed opportunities for attendance.

5. Financial and economic concerns

- ❖ Concerns over event costs: respondents are sensitive to the financial pressures created by costly events and rate increases.
- ❖ Support for local businesses: participants expressed a desire to support local businesses to foster economic growth and event sponsorship.

6. Venue and infrastructure utilisation

- ❖ Concerns over under-utilisation of venues.
- ❖ Accessibility and venue size concerns.

7. Suggestions for event planning and coordination

- ❖ Avoiding clashes and improving scheduling: there were requests for better coordination to prevent event overlaps.
- ❖ Feedback on timing: more events across the weekend.
- ❖ Streamlined processes: more strategic planning and marketing of events.

8. Focus on youth and community engagement

- ❖ Need for youth-friendly events and opportunities for community connections was highlighted.

The additional comments provided emphasis a desire for more diverse, accessible, and well-promoted events in Lower Hutt. Council is encouraged to improve event marketing, collaborate more with local communities, and better utilise existing venues while considering financial constraints.

3.3 Business owners and operators' responses

3.3.1 The following section provides a summary from questions specific to business owners and operators' survey.

Q – How do events in our city impact your business?

1. **Events drive business success and community growth:** some businesses emphasised the value of events in enhancing economic activity, increasing foot traffic, and fostering community vibrancy.
2. **Opportunities for small and local businesses:** events that feature market stalls or local engagement provide valuable opportunities for smaller businesses to connect with new customers.
3. **Positive impact on accommodation sector:** events contribute significantly to the accommodation sector by attracting visitors who require local stays.
4. **Boost in trading during events:** businesses recognise that events provide a direct increase in trading opportunities.
5. **Barriers due to high costs and compliance:** high costs, complex compliance processes, and difficult access to council resources were highlighted as barriers preventing businesses from fully benefiting from local events.

Q – What support or resources would help you better engage with local events?

1. **Desire for more localised and relevant events:** businesses expressed a need for events to be spread across various parts of Lower Hutt, not just focused in the CBD, and to be more relevant to the local community.
2. **Promotion and awareness building:** suggestions included the council actively working with local businesses to promote events and raise awareness to ensure better engagement and attendance.
3. **Facilitating connections within the events industry:** businesses see value in the council fostering connections between suppliers, event organisers, and venues to build a stronger local events network.
4. **Adopting local procurement policies:** there is an opportunity for the council to support local businesses through procurement policies that prioritise local suppliers.

5. **Supporting small businesses through free opportunities:** offering free or low-cost stall opportunities at events was highlighted as a way to support smaller businesses and encourage participation.
6. **Improved communication:** clearer and more proactive communication from the council regarding events and opportunities was suggested as a helpful resource.
7. **Simplifying regulations and processes:** the call for reducing regulatory barriers and offering better support through streamlined processes was again emphasised.

This feedback points to the importance of reducing operational barriers while designing inclusive and impactful events that drive wider business participation and community engagement.

Q – Please provide any additional comments or suggestions regarding the events strategy or future events in Lower Hutt

1. **Desire for signature events:** there is interest in creating unique, annual events that can enhance the identity of Lower Hutt and attract visitors.
2. **Council support:** respondents seeking council to drive positive change in the local events sector.
3. **Improving event infrastructure and resources:** there's a call for better-maintained event assets and resources to support event delivery.
4. **Need for accessible promotion platforms:** suggestions include creating free or low-cost platforms for businesses and events to advertise.
5. **Under-utilisation of local suppliers:** concerns were raised about the lack of engagement with local suppliers, pointing to missed opportunities within the local economy.

6. **Simplifying processes:** council's systems and compliance processes were described as overly complex, suggesting a need for simplification to encourage more events and business engagement.

These comments highlight potential improvements, particularly relating to council processes and support, which would help businesses and could be a focus of the Events Strategy

3.4 Public sector partners responses

3.4.1 The following section provides summarises of responses from the public sector partners survey from questions specific to this survey.

Q – Are there particular aspects of Lower Hutt that you think are appealing for event promotion?

1. **Cultural diversity and opportunities:** Lower Hutt's diverse population is seen as an asset, offering rich cultural experiences.
2. **Ample outdoor and green spaces:** the availability of large, flat outdoor spaces is seen as a key strength for hosting a wide variety of events, from festivals to sporting activities.
3. **Strong sporting infrastructure:** Lower Hutt is recognised for its quality sports facilities, ranging from mid-tier to world-class venues, which enhances its capacity to host significant sporting events.
4. **Strategic location and accessibility:** the city's proximity to Wellington and an international airport is a major advantage for drawing in larger crowds, including regional and international visitors.
5. **Transport connectivity:** the availability of public transport options, including train lines, supports accessibility for local and regional audiences, broadening event attendance potential.

Q – How can Hutt City Council foster partnerships between event organisers, local businesses, and the community?

1. **Establishing a central communication platform:** there is support for creating a dedicated platform to facilitate better communication between event organisers, local businesses, and the community.
2. **Enhancing stakeholder engagement and relationship building:** strengthening relationships with key local groups—such as industry bodies, hospitality, retail, and accommodation sectors—is seen as critical. Regular engagement and participation in local forums are encouraged to build trust and promote collaboration.
3. **Improving operational coordination:** the feedback emphasises the need for operational partnerships (e.g., with transport providers) to ensure smoother event planning and execution.

4. **Facilitating workshops for deeper collaboration:** hosting workshops is suggested as a proactive way to foster collaboration, generate ideas, and encourage resource-sharing between event organisers and local stakeholders.
5. **Expanding Beyond Existing Networks:** feedback indicates that relying on existing networks may limit new engagement opportunities. Broader outreach efforts, such as workshops, could help diversify connections and foster stronger partnerships.

Q – Please provide any additional comments or suggestions regarding the events strategy for future events in Lower Hutt

1. **Focus on community and family-friendly events:** the feedback emphasises the importance of fostering a positive reputation through careful event selection.
2. **Leveraging local strengths and enhancing social benefits:** respondents encourage aligning event strategies with the city's unique strengths while ensuring that events contribute both economically and socially.
3. **Clarity in strategy and funding criteria:** clearer communication around the council's strategy, particularly concerning the types of events supported and the available resources.
4. **Community willingness to contribute:** the community has shown readiness to actively participate in organising events, provided they receive adequate resources and support from the council.
5. **Concerns about event reputation and safety:** some events have raised concerns about promoting negative perceptions, which could undermine community safety and Lower Hutt's broader reputation.
6. **Website usability and accessibility:** criticism was directed at the council's current website, describing it as difficult to navigate. There's a need for a more user-friendly platform that simplifies event-related processes.

7. **Strategic clarity and focus:** feedback suggests that the council should focus on which events align with its strategic objectives and available resources, to avoid overextending.

Lower Hutt's strengths lie in its rich cultural heritage, ample outdoor spaces, and strong sporting infrastructure. Its strategic location near Wellington and robust transport links makes it an attractive venue for diverse events.

3.5 Event promoter responses

- 3.5.1 All the event promoters and organisers who responded to the survey currently or have previously organised or promoted events in Lower Hutt. Key themes from event promoter feedback include:

Positive aspects of organising or promoting events in Lower Hutt:

- ❖ **Ease of collaboration:** many respondents appreciated the ease of working with the Hutt City Council and the professionalism of the events team.
- ❖ **Community engagement:** promoters highlighted the strong sense of community and the enthusiasm of local residents for events.
- ❖ **Good venues:** several respondents mentioned the availability of good venues like Fraser Park, Dowse Square, and Petone Esplanade.
- ❖ **Local support:** there was a positive sentiment about the support from the council and the local community for events.

"Connects and promotes the community."

"HCC [is] easy to deal with, lots of opportunities to bring fresh new events and activations to Hutt City"

Challenges aspects of organising or promoting events in Lower Hutt:

- ❖ **Council support:** some respondents felt that the Hutt City Council could be more supportive and proactive in helping event promoters, particularly in terms of marketing and logistical support.
- ❖ **Costs:** high costs for hiring venues, traffic management, and other logistical aspects were identified as significant challenges.
- ❖ **Regulations:** there were concerns about the over-regulation and the complexity of dealing with council requirements.
- ❖ **Promotion and marketing:** a need for better marketing support and more accessible advertising options was highlighted.

"Too many regulations, unnecessary fees, unneeded traffic management restrictions ..."

"No support in advertising or promotion."

"Ease and visibility of council resources."

Logistical issues that make hosting events difficult here:

- ❖ **Venue accessibility:** some venues were noted as being out of the way or having limited accessibility.
- ❖ **Parking and traffic management:** parking issues and the high cost of traffic management were common concerns.
- ❖ **Accommodation:** limited accommodation options were mentioned, though some respondents noted improvements.

Financial/funding constraints that deter from organising events here:

- ❖ **Funding:** there were mixed responses regarding funding, with some promoters finding it adequate while others struggled with high costs and limited funding opportunities.
- ❖ **Self-supporting events:** some respondents believed that well-organised events should be self-supporting through effective marketing.

Support or resources that would make it easier to bring events here:

- ❖ **Funding and resources:** respondents expressed a need for more funding opportunities, marketing support, and logistical assistance from the council.
- ❖ **Collaboration and communication:** there was a call for better communication and collaboration between the council, event organisers, and local businesses.
- ❖ **Workshops and mentoring:** suggestions included running workshops to help organisers understand how to work with council and offering mentoring and resources.

"Being about to tap into event planning support"

"Marketing support would be the biggest thing."

"We are happy with the current level of engagement from Council:"

Recommendations for Hutt City Council for fostering partnerships:

- ❖ **Proactive engagement:** being more proactive and easier to deal with, reducing red tape, and providing genuine support for events.
- ❖ **Annual updates:** providing annual updates around the council's interest in and incentives for hosting events.
- ❖ **Community involvement:** engaging the community and businesses by doing events, getting feedback, and fostering partnerships.

4 What next?

- 4.1 We are using these insights and feedback to help shape our event strategy. We are working towards having a final Hutt City Council Events Strategy in place by August 2025.
- 4.2 The draft strategy will soon be open for public consultation and available for comment. Notification of the public consultation will be provided through the Council Have Your Say web page and on our social media channels.
- 4.3 We look forward to collaborating with key stakeholders and partners to deliver the action plans which will contribute to delivering the goals and desired outcomes of our strategy.