

# Halifax Regional Event Strategy

Special Events Advisory Committee, June 11, 2025.





GROWING. CHANGING. SURVIVING.

## Why Now

Halifax's event sector is at a turning point. While there are incredible things happening, the truth is: this is one of the most challenging times for events in our region. Organizers are stretched to the limit.

Infrastructure is insufficient. Revenue models are under pressure. Demand is growing, but the support systems haven't kept up.

We have passionate people and willing partners who care deeply about this work. This strategy isn't a celebration of momentum. It's a call to get organized — to remove barriers, unlock potential, and build something that works better for everyone.







## Set a Clear Direction

Align event planning and investment with regional goals and priorities

## Work Smarter, Together

Focus on more coordinated outcomes across agencies and partners. Make processes easier, more transparent, and more equitable.

## Position Halifax for the Future

Strengthen support for community and cultural events, while enhancing our capacity to attract and deliver major events and remaining nationally and internationally competitive.



Moving forward, together.

# Project Team

## Discover Halifax

represented by Mark Teeple, VP Festivals & Events

## Halifax Regional Municipality

represented by Billy Comer, Manager, Events

## Events Nova Scotia, Province of Nova Scotia

represented by Paul Forrest, Director, Events Nova Scotia

## Events East

represented by Colby Pridham, Director of Business Development

## Consultant Team







DIVERSITY OF PERSPECTIVES

# ADVISORY COMMITTEE

## Chair

Tenille Goodspeed, Executive Director, TD Halifax Jazz Festival

## Membership

- Signature and community event leaders
- Arts, culture, and music sectors
- Sports organizations and PSOs
- Community representation
- Tourism, BIDs, hotels, and the hospitality sector

## Role

- Act as a sounding board for key ideas, themes, and challenges
- Bring forward diverse perspectives from across Halifax's event ecosystem
- Help validate direction and highlight opportunities or gaps
- Champion the process within your networks



# TIMELINE & APPROACH

## Phase 1: Insights & Discovery

*April – June 2025*

- Gather meaningful input from across the sector

Engagement tools:

- 1:1 stakeholder interviews
- Themed group workshops & focus groups
- Targeted stakeholder survey (Round 1)
- Advisory Committee

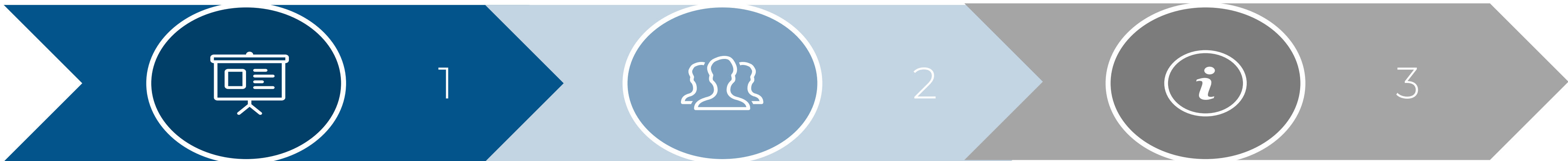
## Phase 3: Confirmation & Presentation

*August 2025 -*

- Share findings with Council, stakeholders, and the public

Engagement tools:

- Final round of briefings and presentations
- Advisory Committee
- Public release and communications



## Phase 2: Validation & Policy Direction

*June – August 2025*

- Test priorities and directions with broader audiences

Engagement tools:

- Public validation survey
- Follow-up focus groups and 1:1s Advisory Committee

# What we heard: what's good

- Urban Halifax: small enough to be friendly, big enough to have what you expect from a city. ("A big small city")
- Downtown is walkable
- The waterfront area
- A variety of events, including free-to-access events
- A thriving local cultural scene - lots of community-based art and artists
- Good places to eat
- There is support from residents, and from the city
- Engaged audiences
- There's a willingness to do more / be more
- Community spirit - a volunteering culture and community support for events
- Diverse communities and history - stories to be told
- There are great people around the table - collaborative and partner orientated
- Good communication between events stakeholders and a general feeling of 'punching above our weight'.

# What we heard: what's not so good

## On regional amenity

- There is an increasing infrastructure deficit for both sporting and cultural facilities; what is in place is ageing out
- Transit is hard and doesn't work well

## On funding, evaluation and priorities

- It isn't always clear why HRM funds events; organizers aren't always clear on the rationale behind why they received funding
- The commercial events sector is inhibited
- High reliance on, or expectation of, public funding
- The current system has too much emphasis on bed nights and economic impact
- No consistent way to evaluate events across HRM and data can be inaccurate
- Tools and data to support event funding decisions are not well developed
- Inequalities in funding distribution



# What we heard: what's not so good

## On what is delivered

- Most events are in the urban core, with low regional spread
- Licensing and permitting is difficult and/or inconsistent, notably liquor and fire regulations
- Sport and culture are not treated the same
- Events don't fully reflect the place or its people
- More authentic involvement of Mi'kmaq culture is required – education is key
- More stories from other cultures that have made the region are also required.

## On people and relationships

- Need more buy in from senior stakeholders on the benefits of events
- Collaboration currently works on personal relationships, rather than formal structures
- Roles and responsibilities between event bidding organizations are not structured or clear



# What we heard: what utopia looks like

- Province, HRM and DH all clear and joined up around why they support events
- Everyone in the industry is clear who does what and why
- Main infrastructure requirements have been addressed for sport and culture
- The licensing environment (and the Special Events Task Force) seeks to help events take place
- Events are enabled to seek and increase commercial revenue
- The unique culture of the municipality is embedded in events, including Mi'kmaw protocols
- Clear funding programs sit under the strategy with defined criteria and outcomes
- Public transit is improved and aligns to events with extra services and integrated ticketing
- Reporting is simplified, directly related to funding rationale and joint across all funding agencies



# What we heard: steps to utopia

- Halifax's political leaders are strong advocates of events.
- The roles and responsibilities of all agencies are clarified, written and published.
- The Strategy is written with a clear implementation plan.
- Regulations and legislation (and notably for liquor, fire, and commercial restrictions) are altered and/or clarified to create a more enabling environment for events.
- The Special Events Task Force is reviewed and reset with an 'enabling' mindset.
- The protocol(s) for representation of Mi'kmaq culture in events is written and rolled out to funded events.
- Programs of support are developed to support delivery of the strategy. Industry is consulted on programs.
- HRM is clear about why it want to have events.
- Issues in the infrastructure estate are addressed under a long term plan.



# What we heard the loudest

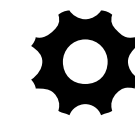
- There is a rich and diversity cultural heritage – but this diversity, or the stories of the region, are not often reflected in events
- There is a single-stop forum established for events to work through the authorising environment – but without a solutions focus, and a clear mandate to support events to happen, this forum (and perhaps the regulations themselves) often create additional or unnecessary barriers for event delivery
- There are enough venue assets in the region to support a wide range of events being delivered – but many of these venues are ageing or require “work arounds” to meet current requirements or audience expectation
- There are sporting strengths (particularly connected to the water) and artistic strengths (particularly connected to music) which allow for an excellent standard and scale of event delivery – and focused attention and longer-term planning in these areas of strength could build a longer-term pipeline of activity
- The city has varied funds and programs to support delivery – but they are primarily focused on what the events are (outputs), rather than what they achieve (outcomes)
- The industry has good connection – but there is opportunity to do more, with great benefit in bringing the sector together to learn more from each other





FROM TRACTION TO INTENTION

# What Happens Next



## From Engagement to Strategy

- Develop draft “Plan on a Page” based on engagement and research
- Ensure the strategy is rooted in local values and regional priorities



## Testing and Drafting

- Review direction with partners and Advisory Committee
- Begin drafting full Regional Event Strategy and Major Events Policy



## Looking Ahead

- Validation of draft strategy through broader public and stakeholder input
- Finalize strategy and policy for approval
- Begin implementation planning