

EVENTS STRATEGY

2025-2030



Whangarei
District Council

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

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This strategy sets a framework for developing events that elevate our community and amplify the value of local and is supported by the delivery of Councils ambitions as articulated in 2024 – 2034 Long Term Plan.

Creating positive experiences is crucial for the success of any event, and this is achieved by supporting the community to deliver accessible events. Local experiences foster a connection between individuals and the unique aspects of a place. Our strategy aims to redefine the concept of ‘events’ in the Whangārei District, emphasising the benefits of events.

Our primary focus and decision-making processes are designed to empower local communities and measure our successes. The impacts we aim to achieve through event investments are geared towards a positive future for our community, making the Whangārei District a great place to live.

We aim to maximise the value of local identity as a crucial element of Whangārei’s narrative and success. This includes building our capability, retaining and attracting exceptional local talent, and enhancing connections among hapu, individuals, communities, businesses and venues.

By embracing core principles for events and community activations, we promote equitable access, environmental sustainability, and economic growth, empowering communities to host events that celebrate diverse identities. These gatherings not only strengthen our local economy but also foster a resilient, self-sufficient community. Our pride in being local is evident in our festivals, markets, and community events that unite us, showcasing the best of what our community has to offer.

This Strategy intends to deliver four key strategic objectives

1. Provide evidence of customer experience and proud to be local (through service delivery)
2. Deliver understanding of what the Venue and Events department does to promote, contribute and showcase our district.
3. Deliver regulatory event support for events
4. Provide events and venues that celebrate our diverse cultures and are accessible to all.

Key messaging is aligned with the Long-Term Plan 2024-2034 Community Outcomes

Our venues and events make an important contribution to the social, cultural, and economic wellbeing of our community:

- Thriving local identity
- Diverse and inclusive culture
- A great place to call home
- Sustainable and resilient future
- We measure the benefits of our council supported events and festivals for our district.

Key actions allocated to the strategic objectives

A strategy for sustainable, resilient, and inclusive events

01

Quality and appropriate venues

- Essential for hosting events that boost cultural and economic well-being.
 - Facilitate a wide range of events that promote and celebrate our culture.
-

02

Community engagement

- Events bring communities together.
 - Celebrate diverse performances, art, sports, and social activities.
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03

Cultural integration

- Strengthen relationships with tangata whenua.
 - Integrate Te Reo and Te Ao into event development.
 - Show leadership in expressing Manaaki and accessibility.
 - Encourage respect and generosity to support diverse local communities.
-

04

Inclusion and diversity

- Advocate for inclusion through diverse event offerings.
- Ensure spaces for fringe events to celebrate diverse cultures.
- Promote equity and diversity through council-community partnerships.



05

Sustainability practices

- Uphold and protect local environments and waterways.
 - Minimize event waste and promote sustainable practices.
 - Regenerate local environments through eco-friendly events.
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06

Community engagement

- Enhance accessibility, capability, capacity, and connection.
 - Build knowledge through diversity and equity opportunities.
 - Foster positive associations between Council and community.
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07

Continuous improvement

- Develop knowledge to support events and event-makers.
 - Focus on understanding the cost, value, and impact of events.
 - Use data to improve future events and support systems.
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08

Measuring impact

- Assess how events contribute to growth and well-being.
- Use data to improve future events and support systems.

[By implementing these strategies, we aim to create a vibrant, inclusive, and sustainable event landscape that celebrates and supports our diverse communities.

In a 2024 survey of residents, 92% of residents recognised provision of local events as a Council service.]

WHERE WE ARE TODAY

Our community collaborations, including festivals, are designed to showcase and highlight our district's talents and rich cultural tapestry. The Venue and Events Department connects with the community through free events that grow local confidence and pride of place.

By investing in major events like the Women's Rugby World Cup played in 2022 and the Hockey Oceania Cup in 2023 we stimulate economic development and attract global visitors. Our events unite local entrepreneurs and businesses through conferences and business events, significantly contributing to the local economy. Our venues and event spaces play a key role in hosting community, cultural festivals, conferences, and sporting events



Local Confidence

- Grow local confidence and pride of place
- Enhance Whangārei's place-identity and destination profile
- Contribute to an authentic and distinctive point of difference - Our Unique Whangārei story



Local Capability

- Build local capability to develop and sustain events District wide
- Develop opportunities for local innovation and entrepreneurship
- Activate and enable local talent and creative communities



Local Connection

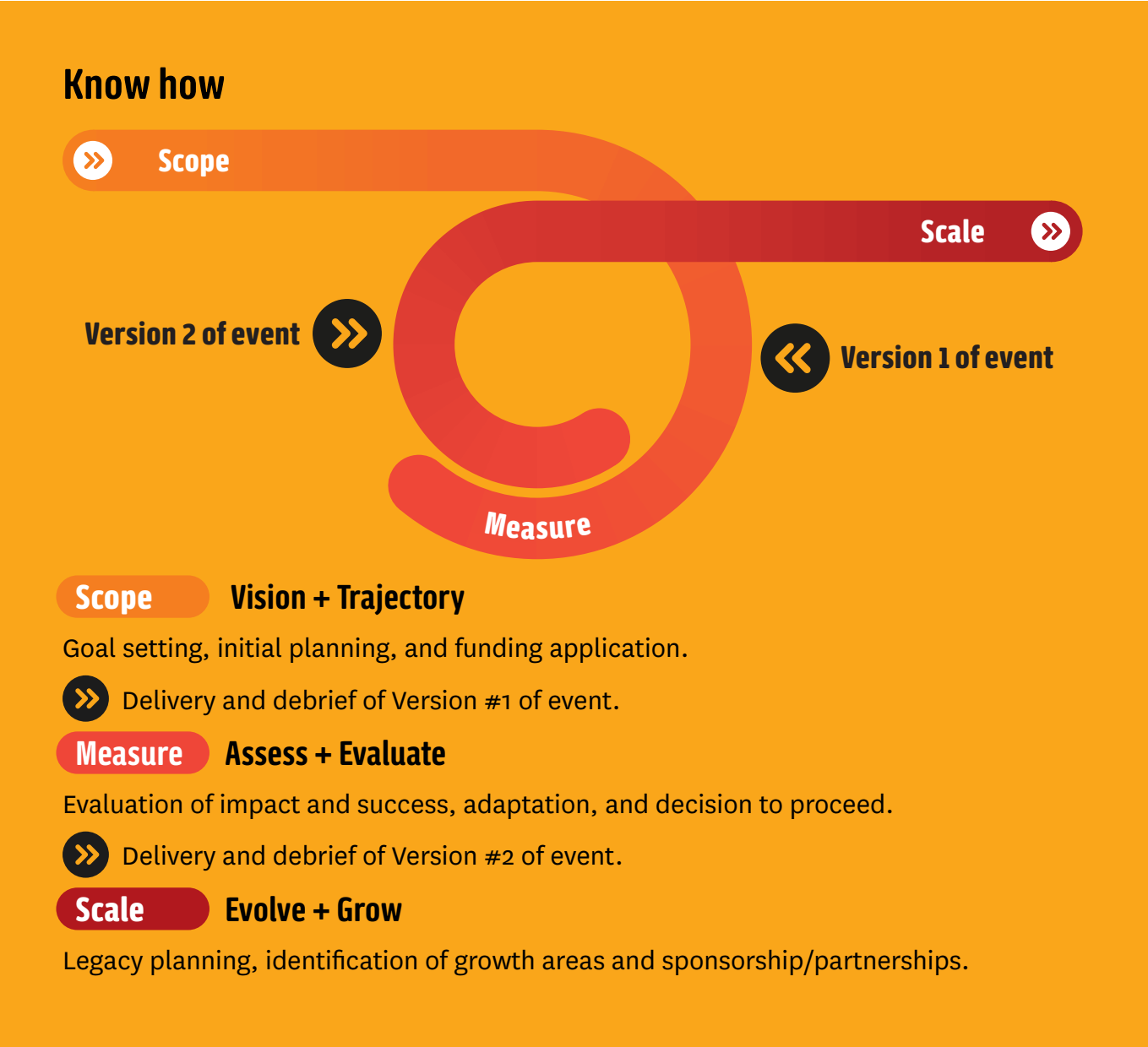
- Increase local participation and engagement in community events
- Promote and celebrate community cohesion, local diversity, and inclusion for all
- Leverage the reciprocal exchange between locals and visitors

EYE TO THE FUTURE

Enhancing sector collaboration and leveraging opportunities

By adopting a future-focused generative planning cycle, we can proactively foster collaboration across the sector. Developing comprehensive measurement tools will enable us to better understand success metrics and audience trends, allowing for the continuous adaptation and evolution of our events.

The cycle requires events to be viewed in a recurring cycle with the motivation to evolve the concept through evaluation and adaptation.





Investing in us

Events in the Whangārei District leverage the strengths and capabilities across Council functions working with community and external stakeholders. This collaboration empowers diverse communities to develop, showcase, and celebrate local capabilities while fostering connections.

Priorities

- Council is resourced to develop and support local events and festivals.
- Community organisations are empowered and supported to contribute to local festivals and events.
- Connect and support local talent and creative communities (including showcasing our world-class talent to build local confidence and pride
- Support event development and event growth across the district
- Encourage cross-sector collaboration and partnerships
- Support and strengthen the role of our local venues in the district's event ecosystem

Local world-class talent: Tim Southee (cricketer), marine industry (world leading yachting innovation), Cindy Kiro (Governor General of New Zealand since 2021), Rachel House (actor), Stacey Michelsen (Black Sticks) and Ian Jones (former All Black).



EXECUTING THE STRATEGY

Experience Local



**Taste
Local**



**Connect
Local**



**Explore
Local**



**Play
Local**

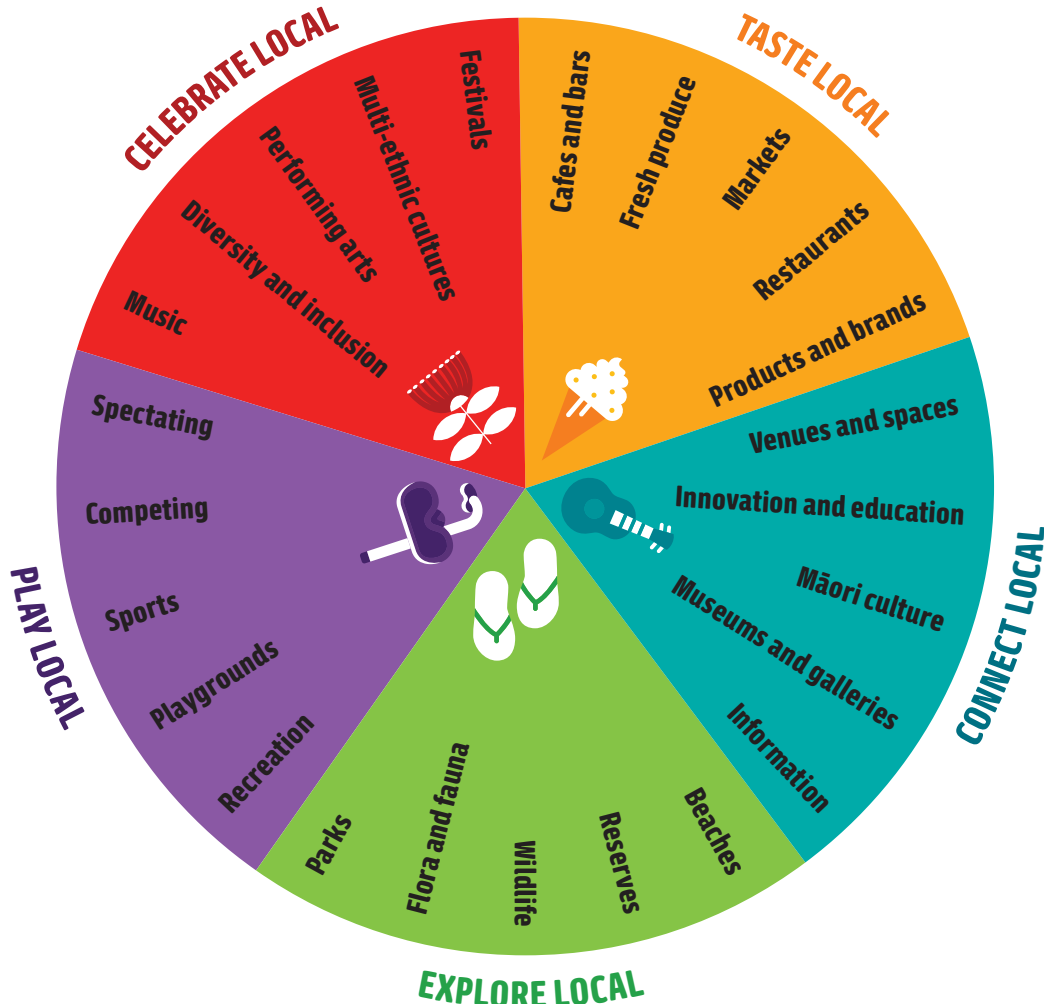


**Celebrate
Local**

The Experience local lens invites and inspires participation with local Whangārei people, places, and activities. The framework invites people to Experience local, taste our local flavours, explore our natural environment, connect with our culture, play, and participate in local recreation and sports. Our goal is to programme two, or more, of the five local experience categories into each event.

This system will:

- inspire and motivate the sector to develop multiple and varied local experiences within events
- inform a framework to evaluate and organise prospective and existing events
- promote and communicate the diversity and value of local events for wider audience appeal
- provide a platform for engagement and public feedback.



Positioning

To complement the adoption of this strategy the following series of directives are advised.

Proactive and connected Council

By front-footing events programming, the Council will call for proposals and collaborate with event partners based on a clear future schedule. This approach aims to focus energy and investment on seasonal programming and opportunities to grow tourism throughout the year.

Expanding community reach through outreach Initiatives

Working with community groups across the district to engage our remote audiences for major events, to foster cross-district collaboration.

Leveraging opportunities

We aim to develop and grow economic event activities by leveraging opportunities in film, television, and event development.

Encourage accessible and inclusive events

We will continue to encourage event opportunities that cater for all.

Outcomes for event types

Major events

- Event generates significant district and/or region wide benefit – both social and economic.
- Generates significant national and/or international profile.
- Involves large audiences more than 10,000 people.
- Event may not be unique to the city and may be able to be replicated.
- Event can be a one-off.

OUTCOMES OF MAJOR EVENTS

- Primary driver is economic impact.
- Economic return of 4:1 or greater.
- Contributes to three or more key strategic principles.



Council events

- Developed and delivered by Whangarei District Council.
- Targeted appeal to attract larger audiences and community involvement.
- Attracts visitors from outside of the district as well as residents.

OUTCOMES OF COUNCIL EVENTS

- Events generate district benefits.
- Generates media awareness.
- Major contributor to the city's vibrancy and identity.
- Has wide appeal with social and/or economic outcomes.
- Contributes to two or more key strategic principles.

Community events

- May be sponsored by, or receive grant from, Whangarei District Council.
- Community-led requiring local input and ownership.
- Targeted at a niche part of the community or geographic area.
- Event can be a one off and not be unique to the district.
- Event is often not for profit.

OUTCOMES OF COMMUNITY EVENTS

- Contributes to a shared sense of local community, pride, and identity.
- Primary drivers are social and economic.
- Provide support for local artists, performers, craftsmen.



Evaluation

To better understand the impact of our events strategy over time, we will utilize a combination of qualitative and quantitative indicators. These indicators will help us measure our effect on local people, businesses, the events themselves, and our place.

Key performance indicators

Our venues and events will deliver the outcomes of the Experience Local: Whangārei Events Strategy and will provide for customer satisfaction.

Performance Measure	Year 1 2024-25 target	Year 2 2025-26 target	Year 3 2026-27 target	Years 4-10 2027-34 target
Percentage of Council delivered events that include two or more of the local experience categories (as per the strategy).	100%	100%	100%	100%
Regulatory support for events across our District. Requests submitted via our operational request dashboard to be successful completed in a timely manner. Measured monthly by the operational request dashboard: Reported in the community operational report.	≥80%	≥80%	≥80%	≥80%
Attracting, growing, and sustaining loyal audiences to events and satisfaction with the venues. Measured via the Audience Participation Survey – result is the average across all sampled events through the year.	≥60%	≥63%	≥65%	≥70%

MILESTONES AND KEY ACTIONS

Successful execution of this strategy will require a range of actions.

Actions

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Adopt the Experience Local/Whangārei Events Strategy 2025-2030

Responsibility: Elected Members

Timeframe: July 2025

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Coordinate Council staffing toward implementation of the strategy across management, event administration, marketing/ social media, communications and facilities

Responsibility: WDC + External

Timeframe: Continued

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Proactively socialise the strategy to prospective and existing event makers, promoters, funders, sponsors, and service providers

Responsibility: WDC

Timeframe: Continued

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Community engagement

- Surveys and feedback: Conduct regular surveys to gather feedback on events
- Community meetings: Strengthen the creative ecosystem through opportunities, visibility, and networks.
- Celebrate local stories, voices, and creative excellence social media and marketing campaigns

Responsibility: Events and Venues

Timeframe: Continued

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Develop

- Event proposal forms
- Pre-event evaluation criteria
- Post-event impact measurement process

Responsibility: WDC + External

Timeframe: LTP Year 2

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Regulatory

- Road closure processes refined
- Events on Council land permit process
- Filming on Council land process developed
- Crowded spaces strategy

Responsibility: WDC

Timeframe: LTP year 2

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Assess all currently funded and proposed events against newly developed pre-event evaluation criteria prior to proceeding

Responsibility: WDC

Timeframe: ASAP

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Collaborate with existing event operators and activators within our District to understand partnership potential's

Responsibility: WDC

Timeframe: Continued

Event diversity

Use guiding principles for events and community activations considering:

- equitable access
- environmental sustainability
- economic benefits
- Social benefits

Responsibility: WDC

Timeframe: ASAP

Partnerships and sponsorships

- Local businesses: Collaborate with local businesses to sponsor events and provide resources.
- District development: Work with district development and Northland Inc, our regional tourism Organisation to attract visitors to Whangārei through well-promoted events.
- Educational institutions: Partner with schools and universities to involve students in event planning and execution.

Responsibility: Venues and Events

Timeframe: ASAP

Contribute to related parts of Council with a view toward supporting event growth i.e. licensing, zoning, Council-owned property, urban design, and planning

Responsibility: WDC

Timeframe: Continued

Marketing and promotion

Aimed at capturing and supporting community and district-wide event streams, it's essential to focus on creating a diverse, inclusive, and easily accessible events ecosystem that appeals to a wide range of audiences.

- Social media campaigns: Use social media platforms to promote events and engage with the community.
- Local media: Advertise events through local newspapers, radio stations, and community bulletin boards.
- Event calendars: Maintain an up-to-date online event calendar on the Whangarei District Council website.
- WOW (What's on Whangarei)

Responsibility: WDC

Timeframe: Continued - WIP

Redesign and develop

- WoW - Event development to better suit development of events for the Whangarei District.
- Endless summer festival
- Multicultural arts festival – 2027 – 2028 April
- Youth festival – 2025 -2026 – (May)
- Puanga Matariki June/July
- Silver Festival September
- Savor Festival October
- Christmas Festival November - December

Responsibility: Venues and Events

Timeframe: LTP Year 2 and 3

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Support re-development of KEA and the Knowledge Precinct. The knowledge, education and art hub to include a fit for purpose entertainment solution for Northland

Responsibility: WDC

Timeframe: Continued

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Re develop a pricing structure for events held on council land to support maintenance of event spaces

Responsibility: WDC

Timeframe: LTP Year 2

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Sustainability and inclusivity

- Eco-friendly practices: Implement sustainable practices such as recycling, waste reduction, and using eco-friendly materials at events.
- Accessibility: Ensure events are accessible to all, including those with disabilities, by providing necessary facilities and support.

Responsibility: WDC + External

Timeframe: Continuous

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Evaluation and improvement:

- Post-event analysis
 - Purpose: Review the event to measure success and identify areas for improvement.
 - Methods: Collect feedback from attendees and analyze data like attendance and engagement.
 - Outcome: Understand strengths and weaknesses to inform future events.
- Continuous improvement:
 - Purpose: Use feedback and data to enhance future events.
 - Methods: Implement changes based on insights, refine processes, and adopt best practices.
 - Outcome: Achieve more successful and impactful events over time.

Responsibility: All

Timeframe: Continuous



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