Independent Review of New Zealand's Approach to Events

Summary Report
Final Report

MARTIN JENKINS

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Preface

This report has been prepared for the Ministry of Business, Innovation and Employment by Stephen Knuckey, Edwina Merito, Penny Fitzpatrick, Alice Russon, and Sharyn Jones from MartinJenkins, and Susan Sawbridge (Daylight), Devorah Blumberg (Independent Advisor), and Stuart Turner (Purple Moon).

For over 30 years MartinJenkins has been a trusted adviser to clients in the government, private, and non-profit sectors in Aotearoa New Zealand and internationally. Our services include organisational performance, employment relations, financial and economic analysis, economic development, research and evaluation, data analytics, engagement, and public policy and regulatory systems.

We are recognised as experts in the business of government. We have worked for a wide range of public-sector organisations from both central and local government, and we also advise business and non-profit clients on engaging with government.

Kei te āwhina mātau ki te whakapai ake i a Aotearoa. We are a values-based organisation, driven by a clear purpose of helping make Aotearoa New Zealand a better place. Our firm is made up of people who are highly motivated to serve the New Zealand public, and to work on projects that make a difference.

Established in 1993, we are a privately owned New Zealand limited liability company, with offices in Wellington and Auckland. Our firm is governed by a Board made up of Executive Partners and Independent Directors. Our Independent Directors are Jenn Bestwick and Chair David Prentice. Our Executive Partners are Sarah Baddeley, Nick Carlaw, Allana Coulon, and Nick Davis.

Status of this report

This report presents the findings and recommendations of an independent review. The findings, recommendations, scenarios, and illustrative funding ranges are the independent advice of the review team. They do not represent Government policy, ministerial decisions, or commitments to future funding, institutional change, regulatory reform, or new revenue mechanisms.

Any decisions arising from the review will be matters for Ministers and, where relevant, Cabinet. Proposals involving additional Crown funding, new funding mechanisms, institutional change, legislation, or regulation would require further policy development, consultation, fiscal analysis, and consideration through established government processes.

Overview: Building an events system to deliver greater value

The Ministry of Business, Innovation and Employment (MBIE) commissioned MartinJenkins to review how Aotearoa New Zealand's events system currently performs, with a focus on identifying the changes needed to deliver greater and more consistent public value.

The review considered how the events system works now, what works well, where it is under pressure, and what needs to change to create a national approach that is better coordinated, more focussed on outcomes, and ready for future opportunities.

The opportunity to build a more mature events system

Events create public value for New Zealand

Events are a visible and practical way for New Zealand to create public value. They support the visitor economy, provide platforms for trade and investment, build New Zealand's international profile, strengthen regional identities, showcase culture, and create connections and pride.

Their value is not limited to what happens during the event window. The best events can create durable benefits before, during, and after delivery if they are selected well, supported well, and leveraged deliberately.

Seen as a safe, capable, distinctive host, New Zealand has a strong base to build on

New Zealand has a strong base to build on. It is seen as a safe, credible, and distinctive host country. It has successfully delivered both major and mega events. It also has established business-event capability, strong regional and city networks, experienced organisers and venues, and committed people across central government, local government, industry, and communities. The system often works because experienced people make it work.

But our events system is not structured to capture the full benefits

The central issue is that New Zealand's system is not yet structured to consistently realise the full opportunity from events. The arrangements have important strengths, but they depend too much on informal coordination and are not yet sufficiently resourced or organised.

Funding settings are narrower and sometimes shorter-term than the opportunity requires. Strategic direction is dispersed across multiple adjacent agendas. Public events and business events are not yet managed as connected parts of a single national portfolio. The central–local relationship is critical but still too often negotiated event by event. The importance of leverage and legacy benefits is recognised but not consistently resourced or embedded from the start.

We need a more mature, more deliberate national events system

The change needed is to develop a more mature system. The opportunity now is to organise the existing strengths into a more deliberate national system – one that can identify the right event opportunities earlier, assess them through a shared public-value framework, bring the right partners together sooner, and invest in ways that are proportionate to the value being created.

As shown in Table 1, five shifts are central to this change. New Zealand needs to move from:

1. largely event-by-event decision-making to more active portfolio discipline
2. dispersed strategic settings to a clearer national direction
3. relatively narrow and sometimes short-term funding tools to coordinated co-investment and selected risk-sharing
4. informal coordination to recognised stewardship
5. uneven leverage planning to a more deliberate approach to designing public value from the start.

These shifts are mutually reinforcing. Strategy gives investment decisions a clearer purpose. Better investment settings make the strategy credible. Stewardship helps the system act coherently. Stronger central–local coordination and better integration of public and business events make delivery more effective and realistic. More deliberate leverage and legacy planning helps ensure that events generate benefits that last beyond the immediate experience.

Table 1: Key shifts needed and what they mean in practice

The shift required	**What it means in practice**
From event-by-event decisions to portfolio discipline	Use a shared public-value framework and national pipeline view to assess how events contribute collectively to visitor, trade, innovation, cultural, regional, social, and reputational outcomes.
From dispersed strategy to a national direction	Develop a National Events Strategy that clarifies why New Zealand invests, where it will focus, how the portfolio will be managed and how success will be measured.
From narrow funding tools to coordinated co-investment	Retain important current mechanisms, but place them in a clearer funding architecture with enhanced investment and selected risk-sharing tools.
From informal coordination to recognised stewardship	Create a clearer centre of gravity for prospecting, pipeline and portfolio advice, public–business integration, leverage, legacy, and system performance.
From uneven leverage and legacy to public value designed in from the start	Build leverage and legacy into feasibility, investment, and delivery decisions so benefits are not left to chance.

Creating a public-value typology to capture different kinds of benefits

Events can create broad public value and multiple benefits at once

Events are not a single-purpose policy tool. At their best, they are platforms for creating broad public value, generating multiple benefits at once.

These include immediate visitor and local economic activity, but also wider benefits such as trade and investment; sector development and innovation; reputation and profile; knowledge, networks and collaboration; talent and skills; participation and achievement; culture and identity; community wellbeing and cohesion; place and amenity value; and system capability and legacy.

An event's value is not confined to the event itself. It also comes from what happens before and afterwards, including the partnerships formed, sectors profiled, communities involved, places activated, knowledge shared, and legacies built. Well-chosen and well-leveraged events can contribute to national priorities in ways that extend well beyond the event window.

An important distinction is the difference between event expenditure and event value. Visitor expenditure is important because it is tangible, measurable, and easily understood. But it is not the only reason to invest. A conference linked to a priority sector may generate direct spending by delegates but also support international research networks, export relationships, and investment leads. A major cultural or sporting event may generate ticket sales and hotel nights, but also create international media exposure and social participation that would not otherwise occur.

We need an assessment framework that incorporates different types of public value

The implication is that New Zealand should not assess events only by genre, attendance, or immediate expenditure. It should assess them using a typology of different kinds of public value.

This framework would allow decision makers to ask the right questions: what benefits are realistically expected, who will benefit, what would not happen without public support, what partners are needed to unlock the value, and what should be measured before, during, and after the event.

Current programmes already consider a range of economic and wider benefits. The improvement proposed here is not to introduce public value for the first time, but to use a more consistent and transparent framework across event types, to apply it proportionately, and to consider value at the portfolio level as well as at the level of individual events.

A stronger events system should distinguish between different but related forms of value, as depicted in Figure 1.

- **Economic value** includes visitor economy effects, local economic development, and trade and investment.
- **Strategic value** includes sector development and innovation; reputation and profile; knowledge, networks, and collaboration; talent and skills; and participation and achievement.
- **Social and cultural value** includes culture and identity, and community wellbeing and cohesion.
- **Place and system value** includes infrastructure and amenities, and system capability and legacy.

No single event or type of event can deliver every benefit. It is important to make choices clear, including which benefits are the main reason for support, which are secondary, which require active leverage, which are likely to be short-, medium-, or long-term, and which should be measured through evaluation.

A stronger system will recognise wider value but apply disciplined tests

This breadth of potential benefits is both the source of the opportunity and the reason the system needs to be more deliberate.

If events are assessed too narrowly, government risks undervaluing opportunities that create long-term public value beyond immediate expenditure. If events are assessed too loosely, public investment can become hard to explain and difficult to prioritise.

A stronger system needs to recognise the wider value of events while applying disciplined tests for where public involvement is justified.

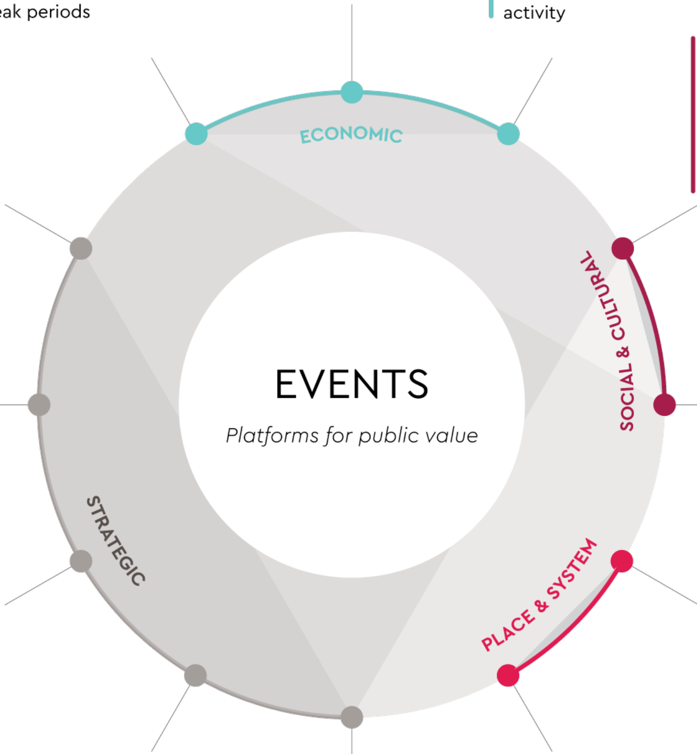
Different types of events generate different mixes of public value

This broader framing is also important because different types of events generate different mixes of public value.

- Mega events may create international profile, visitor activity, and long-term infrastructure or capability effects.
- Major public events can deliver strong visitor, cultural, reputational, and wellbeing benefits.
- International business events often generate high-value visitation, but their greatest impact may lie in research collaboration, trade relationships, investment leads, sector development, and talent attraction.
- National anchor events and significant regional events can strengthen place identity, smooth seasonality, build event-delivery capability, and support regional development.
- Community and local events play a critical role in wellbeing, participation, cultural expression, and belonging.

Sporting events illustrate how several forms of public value can be created together. Alongside visitor and profile benefits, they can support participation, inclusion, volunteers and officials, high-performance pathways, organisational capability, national pride, and international sporting relationships. These outcomes should be assessed through measures suited to the event rather than through visitor expenditure alone.

Figure 1: **A public-value typology: economic, strategic, social and cultural, and place and system benefits**



VISITOR ECONOMY

Attracting domestic and international visitors, increasing visitor nights and spend, supporting repeat visitation and extending demand into shoulder or off-peak periods

TRADE & INVESTMENT

Creating platforms for market access, commercial links, investor interest, export relationships and investment attraction

LOCAL ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Supporting retained local spend, local suppliers, jobs, venue use, hospitality, accommodation, transport and other local business activity

CULTURE & IDENTITY

Providing platforms for manaakitanga, Māori identity, cultural expression, local identity, national story and shared cultural confidence

COMMUNITY WELLBEING & COHESION

Strengthening engagement, vibrancy, pride, resilience, belonging, social connection and quality of life

SYSTEM CAPABILITY & LEGACY

Building partnerships, pipeline maturity, learning, trust, delivery capability, event innovation and the institutional capability needed to deliver better over time

PLACE, INFRASTRUCTURE & AMENITIES

Improving utilisation of venues, infrastructure, public spaces and amenities, and supporting place attractiveness and liveability

TALENT & SKILLS

Supporting talent attraction and retention, workforce capability, volunteer capability, leadership and repeated opportunities to deepen expertise

PARTICIPATION & ACHIEVEMENT

Creating pathways for participation, showcasing, awareness, progression and achievement in sport, culture, enterprise and innovation, and community activity

REPUTATION & PROFILE

Generating media exposure, destination profile, host credibility, rightsholder confidence and future bidding competitiveness

KNOWLEDGE, NETWORKS & COLLABORATION

Enabling learning, research connections, professional networks, cross-sector collaboration and enduring business, cultural, sporting or investment relationships

SECTOR DEVELOPMENT & INNOVATION

Supporting priority sectors, productivity, innovation, sector showcasing, collaboration and alignment with regional or national economic strategies

Our events system needs active portfolio management

New Zealand needs active portfolio management alongside event-by-event assessment. A balanced portfolio can include different kinds of value – for example, a small number of nationally significant major events, a stronger pipeline of international business events, growth pathways for selected anchor events, and regional events that contribute to seasonality, place, and community outcomes.

Event types should be considered according to the value each opportunity can create, what public support would unlock, and how the opportunity fits within the wider portfolio.

The assessment framework needs to be applied proportionately

The framework should also be used proportionately. A regional festival should not be expected to deliver trade and investment benefits, while a major international congress should not be assessed only on visitor spending. The aim is to match event type, public role, and evaluation efforts to the benefits that are realistically achievable.

A selective stewardship role for central government

Government should focus selectively on events where national levers are needed to unlock significant value

Central government should not be involved in every event. Its role should be selective, focussing on events where national levers can unlock public value that the market, local government, or event organisers are unlikely to realise on their own. This includes events with:

- significant international exposure or reputational implications
- strong potential for trade, investment, innovation, or sector development
- national cultural or identity value
- complex delivery requiring multiple agencies to coordinate the management of scale, risk, reputational issues, or wider opportunities
- opportunities for long-term legacy benefits that require deliberate planning and investment.

Figure 2: Event hierarchy and national additionality

Where benefits are primarily local (such as community participation, local identity, or domestic place activation), councils, iwi, community organisations, and regional partners will usually lead, with central government playing a lighter enabling role.

This means the case for central government intervention strengthens as events become larger, more complex, more nationally significant, and more dependent on cross-agency coordination. This is generally the case for mega events, major public events, international business events, and national anchor events, as shown in Figure 2.

A selective stewardship role for government would help create a balanced event portfolio

This framing also provides a more useful way to consider different event types. A concert, business event, cultural festival, sporting event, exhibition, or regional anchor event should not be included or excluded simply because of its genre or label. Events should be assessed for public value, additionality, strategic fit, deliverability, and their contribution to the national event portfolio.

It also shifts the discussion from whether New Zealand wants "more events" to what kind of event portfolio New Zealand wants, what public value that portfolio should generate, and what role central government should play, as depicted in Table 2.

This role has a stewardship dimension as well. Government's role includes deciding whether to fund individual events and creating the settings that help the whole system make better choices. These settings include strategy, information, partner mobilisation, funding tools, regulatory guidance, evaluation, capability support, and a clear interface for the sector. A stronger stewardship role would help New Zealand see the portfolio as a whole, not just individual event proposals.

A common national framework should still accommodate differences between event types. Cultural events and exhibitions, for example, may have longer development lead times and need earlier certainty of funding. A national approach should retain specialist sector expertise and should not displace existing agency mandates or functions providing cultural, commemorative, sporting, or community programmes.

Table 2: Central government's role in different categories of events

Event level	Primary public-value categories	Typical rationale for public support	How central government adds value	Key roles
Mega events	Visitor economy; local economic development; trade and investment; reputation and profile; culture and identity; place, infrastructure, and amenities; system capability and legacy	Rare opportunities with national-scale spillovers, high complexity, risk, and international profile	National leadership; strategic coordination; high-level risk management; co-investment or underwriting; border, security, transport, and regulatory facilitation; national and international promotion; and whole-of-government leverage and legacy planning	Leader, funder/underwriter, system integrator
Major public events	Visitor economy; local economic development; reputation and profile; culture and identity; participation and achievement; system capability and legacy	National significance, strong attendance or media reach, wider spillovers beyond the host region	Strategic co-investment and national promotion, together with cross-agency leverage and evaluation where national public value, additionality, leverage, and portfolio fit are clear	Strategic co-investor, leverage and legacy coordinator, evaluation partner
International business events	Visitor economy; trade and investment; sector development and innovation; knowledge, networks, and collaboration; talent and skills; reputation and profile	Benefits extend beyond tourism to research, innovation, investment, knowledge networks, sector growth, and talent outcomes	Bid support, sector alignment, international promotion, and targeted leverage with priority sectors, research organisations, and investment partners	Bid supporter, promoter, and sector-leverage partner
National anchor events	Visitor economy; local economic development; reputation and profile; culture and identity; community wellbeing and cohesion; place, infrastructure, and amenities; system capability and legacy	Regionally based events with broader-than-local growth potential and contribution to national portfolio balance	Selective funding, capability support, and pipeline development where an event has credible potential to create wider-than-local value or fill an important portfolio gap	Selective growth partner
Regional public and domestic business events	Visitor economy; local economic development; knowledge, networks, and collaboration; culture and identity; community wellbeing and cohesion; place, infrastructure, and amenities	Primarily local or regional benefits, including place activation, domestic demand, professional networks, and local supplier activity	Guidance and occasional support where national value, system value, or a credible growth pathway exists	Enable locally led delivery
Community events	Community wellbeing and cohesion; culture and identity; participation and achievement; local economic development	Local public value, including cohesion, identity, participation, belonging, and volunteer capability	Limited central role except where linked to specific national priorities or wider system benefits	Primarily local, iwi, or community-led

This review's approach

The review examined the events system across six interrelated lines of inquiry:

- the strategic framework and outcomes
- investment, funding, and risk
- governance and system coordination
- regulatory and legislative settings
- the public–business events interface, and
- the central–local government interface.

The review was informed by document analysis; stakeholder interviews across central government, local government, industry, and event partners; sector workshops; and international comparisons with Victoria, New South Wales, Queensland, Scotland, Wales, Denmark, Singapore, and British Columbia.

The review provides independent advice to inform future consideration and decisions by government. It does not pre-empt government decisions on a National Events Strategy, future funding levels, institutional arrangements, regulatory change, or possible new revenue mechanisms. Where this report discusses funding ranges or particular mechanisms, these are illustrative scenarios intended to inform subsequent policy development rather than recommended appropriations or government commitments.

The opportunity, and its size and nature

The benefits that events create

Events generate economic benefits for New Zealand

The available evidence shows that events already make a material contribution.

Public events are estimated to have generated almost 18 million attendances and around $1.1 billion in spending on accommodation, restaurants, and transport in the year to 1 August 2026.[1] Multi-day business events generated an estimated $925 million in total expenditure in 2025.[2] An evaluation of the former Major Events Development Fund found that 18 supported events generated approximately $32.1 million in net economic benefit from $7.2 million of investment, a return of around 4.5 times the investment, after accounting for substitution and displacement effects.[3]

Those figures should not be interpreted as a forecast of returns from future investment but as historical evidence that carefully selected major events can generate positive net economic benefits.

But economic benefits are only part of the story

Those dollar figures capture only part of the story. They do not fully capture social cohesion, national pride, cultural expression, volunteer and workforce development, business connections, international reputation, and longer-term value that can come from a well-leveraged event.

The stronger the system becomes at planning and measuring these wider benefits, the easier it will be to make good public investment decisions and explain the value created.

Recent evaluations illustrate why the value of events cannot be understood through expenditure alone.

- The FIFA Women's World Cup 2023 generated benefits beyond tourism expenditure, including increased visibility of women's sport, participation pathways, public awareness, and programmes reaching more than 100,000 children and young people.[4]

1 PredictHQ data for the year to 1 August 2026, supplied by The New Zealand Events Association. The data includes community events, concerts, conferences, expos, festivals, performing arts, and sports events, and spending on accommodation, restaurants, and transport.

2 Business Events Industry Aotearoa, "National Business Events Value Data", https://www.beia.co.nz/programmes/be-data/national-business-events-value-data. Total expenditure includes delegate, companion, and event owner expenditure.

3 Ministry of Business, Innovation and Employment, "Economic Evaluation Outcomes: Major Events Development Fund – Meta-Evaluation Report", 2013, https://www.majorevents.govt.nz/assets/Major-Events/63bcd1bf67/MEDF-evaluation-report.pdf. The evaluation relates to a selected portfolio supported under earlier funding and market conditions. Increasing the scale of investment would not necessarily produce benefits at the same average rate. Additional opportunities may generate lower or higher returns, and a larger portfolio could face capacity constraints or diminishing marginal returns. Any future funding proposal should be supported by updated, proposal-specific analysis of expected net public value rather than by extrapolating the 2013 result.

4 Fresh Info, "FIFA Women's World Cup 2023 National Economic Impact Evaluation", December 2023, https://www.majorevents.govt.nz/dmsdocument/27911-fifa-womens-world-cup-2023-national-impact-evaluation-report.

- The 36th America's Cup generated place-making, education, skills, cultural, and partnership benefits, including infrastructure improvements, stronger mana whenua partnerships, capability initiatives, and environmental projects.[5]
- Research on the benefits associated with live performances in New Zealand found that they provide an immediate boost to life satisfaction and contribute to a lasting improvement in overall wellbeing, with wellbeing benefits estimated at $7.5 billion for the 12 months to June 2024.[6]

The opportunity is to build a better portfolio, rather than simply increase event numbers or pursue the largest headline impacts. More events are not automatically better if they crowd out other activity, create delivery pressure, stretch local capacity, or duplicate existing value. A stronger portfolio would have the right mix of events, in the right places, at the right times, supported with the right tools and connected to wider benefits.

New Zealand needs to be more deliberate about trade-offs

This also means New Zealand needs to be more deliberate about trade-offs. A high-profile international event may generate visitor and reputation value but require significant public risk-sharing. A business event may be smaller in public visibility but more valuable for sector relationships. A regional event may not have national media reach but may be important for seasonal spread or regional identity.

A mature system can compare these opportunities using a common public-value framework rather than defaulting to the most visible or immediate proposition.

The system New Zealand has today

New Zealand's events system comprises a wide range of organisations and activities. Central government, local government, regional tourism and economic development agencies, convention bureaux, industry associations, venues, iwi and Māori partners, event owners, rights holders, promoters, organisers, suppliers, and communities all play different roles.

Some identify opportunities. Some fund or co-invest. Some provide venues, offer local advice, or facilitate regulatory compliance. Some deliver the event. Some lead leverage and legacy. Most events require several of these roles to come together.

New Zealand's events system has strengths

This distributed system has real strengths. It allows events to draw on different types of knowledge and expertise. It enables different event types to develop through pathways that make sense for their market. It also means New Zealand can be flexible and relationship-driven, which is often a strength in a smaller system.

More generally, as described in Table 3, New Zealand has an established reputation as a safe, capable, and distinctive host, with a proven track record of successfully delivering complex major events.

[5] Fresh Info, "36th America's Cup Impact Evaluation – Final Report", 30 June 2021, https://www.majorevents.govt.nz/dmsdocument/15674-36th-americas-cup-impact-evaluation-report.

[6] Carter, D., Hoad, C., Muller, P., Tappenden, A., Wilson, J., and Wilson, O., 2024, Massey University, "Measuring and Articulating the Value of Live Performance in Aotearoa", https://www.massey.ac.nz/documents/2119/Measuring-and-Articulating-the-Value-of-Live-Performance-in-Aotearoa.pdf.

Table 3: Key strengths and challenges in New Zealand's events system

What works now	**What holds the system back**
New Zealand has credibility as a host country and has delivered complex events successfully.	International competition is becoming more deliberate, more commercial, and more able to offer certainty earlier than New Zealand.
The Major Events Fund (MEF) and Conference Assistance Programme (CAP) provide important national mechanisms.	Funding scale, timing, and tool mix do not fully match long lead times, rising costs, or the strategic value of business events.
Regions and councils bring venue, place, and delivery capability.	Central–local roles, co-investment expectations, and local delivery implications are not always clear early enough.
Events system relationships and expertise are strong.	The system can be hard to navigate and relies heavily on informal relationships rather than clear system architecture.
Leverage and legacy are widely recognised.	Leverage and legacy are not yet consistently embedded from the beginning of the event lifecycle or funded proportionately.

The system also has important institutional foundations in place, including the Major Events Fund (MEF) and Conference Assistance Programme (CAP), as well as increasing venue capability. Mega-event opportunities can also receive event-specific funding through Cabinet decisions.[7] There is growing recognition of the importance of leverage and legacy effects.

[7] The scale of that funding varies considerably between opportunities and is not included in the core funding figures used in this report.

The architecture of our events system is not sufficiently strong

The limitation is that a system without a sufficiently strong architecture can become uneven. Opportunities can arrive through many channels, but not all are visible early enough. Funding settings do not always align with long lead times, rising delivery costs, or the strategic value of some event opportunities. Public events and business events can be planned through different systems even when they contribute to overlapping national outcomes. Local government can face late expectations to co-invest, regulate, or host without enough early involvement. Leverage and legacy can be identified after core event decisions have already been made. These challenges are becoming more significant as the international environment becomes increasingly competitive and sophisticated.

The current arrangements work best when there is a major opportunity, a clear deadline, strong personal relationships, and enough political or organisational attention to bring the system together. But that is not a reliable basis for long-term performance. A stronger system should not rely on exceptional effort each time a complex event opportunity arises; it should make effective coordination normal.

Why change is needed now

The current settings are not yet suited to today's more competitive environment

New Zealand's events system is not broken, but it is not yet set up to consistently capture the opportunities available in a more competitive environment. The risk is not only that New Zealand loses individual bids – the larger risk is that it misses the chance to build a coherent event portfolio that supports national priorities over time.

As summarised in Table 4, the global market has changed. The market for event rights is increasingly commercialised. Rights holders and promoters increasingly value speed, certainty, risk-sharing, and the ability to mobilise professional partners. Business events are increasingly valued for their connections to trade, innovation, and sector development, not just for how much delegates spend. Leading destinations are using long-term strategies, dedicated investment platforms, pipeline management, and strong lead agencies to deliberately shape their event portfolios.

Table 4: Key shifts in the events market, and the implications for New Zealand

Market shift	**Implication for New Zealand**
Event opportunities are increasingly commercial and competitive.	Investment settings need to support early commitment, clear negotiation parameters, and credible risk-sharing where public value justifies it.
Business events are increasingly strategic.	New Zealand needs to connect business events to priority sectors, trade, innovation, research, and investment outcomes, rather than focusing primarily on visitation outcomes.
Destinations are managing portfolios, not only bids.	New Zealand needs a national pipeline view and portfolio logic that allows trade-offs, regional spread, and long-term priorities to be managed.
Costs and delivery complexity are increasing.	Funding, regulatory, and local delivery arrangements need to be considered earlier and more transparently.
Leverage and legacy are becoming part of the competitive proposition.	New Zealand needs to design wider public value into events from the start, with clear ownership and resources.

New Zealand's current settings are not yet suited to that environment. We can still win important events, but the current system is not always able to move as quickly, signal as much certainty, align as many partners, or present the same integrated national proposition as more mature competitor jurisdictions. In a market where lead times are long and opportunities are contested, these system characteristics matter.

Successful events systems have some common features, including clear strategy and leadership, and a portfolio approach

International practice points to several common characteristics. Successful events systems are not all organised in the same way, but they tend to have common features: a clear long-term strategy, clear leadership and stewardship, dedicated investment tools, effective central–local partnerships, and a deliberate approach to leverage and legacy.

Across the comparators considered by this review, events are increasingly managed as portfolios rather than as isolated investments, with decisions guided by broader economic, tourism, cultural, and community objectives.

Different comparators usefully illustrate different features:

- **Scotland** demonstrates how major public events and business events can operate within a shared national strategy supported by long-term pipeline planning and coordinated investment.
- **Victoria** illustrates the benefits of strong state leadership, significant investment capacity, and close alignment between events, tourism, trade, investment, and destination development objectives.
- **Singapore** shows how highly coordinated institutions can use both public and business events to strengthen international reputation, stimulate economic activity, and support priority sectors.
- **Vancouver** and **British Columbia** highlight the importance of capable local delivery partners, innovative accommodation-linked funding mechanisms, and practical collaboration across multiple levels of government.
- **Denmark** demonstrates that more distributed systems can operate successfully where responsibilities are clear and trusted relationships are strong, while also illustrating some of the limitations of relying primarily on coordination rather than formal stewardship arrangements.

The lesson is that competitiveness depends on the system and strategy around each event

New Zealand should draw on international practice without copying any one model. Competitiveness increasingly depends on the system around the event, including the clarity of priorities, the ability to act early, the credibility of the investment proposition, the strength of local delivery partnerships, the connection between public and business events, and the capability to turn events into wider public value.

A more strategic approach would also reduce the risk of policy swings. Event systems need continuity because bids, rights, venue planning, negotiation with partners, and sector capability all operate over multi-year timeframes.

Short-term funding windows can be useful, but they cannot substitute for a durable strategy and investment architecture. Without those foundations, the system will continue to rely on a series of one-off opportunities and reactive coordination.

What a stronger events system would look like

The system's actors would work within a clearer, more predictable national architecture

A stronger events system would have clear national direction, but it would not be over-centralised. Regions, councils, industries, venues, event owners, iwi and Māori partners, promoters, and communities would continue to be central to identifying, hosting, delivering, and leveraging events. The difference is that they would work within a clearer, more predictable national architecture.

That architecture would have the features highlighted in Table 5: a shared strategy, a visible portfolio and pipeline, consistent tests for public value and additionality, coordinated investment pathways, recognised stewardship, stronger public–business event integration, practical regulatory support, and earlier leverage and legacy planning.

The shift to a stronger system can be summarised as moving from a capable but partially connected model to a more coordinated and enduring national approach, as shown in Figure 3.

The stronger system would be easier to navigate and easier to explain. Event owners and rights holders would have a clear route into government, when needed. Regions would be involved early enough to assess feasibility, local benefits, costs, risks, and delivery implications before committing to an event. Ministers would receive clearer advice on strategic fit, public value, additionality, risk, regional implications, the readiness of partners, and portfolio trade-offs.

Table 5: Features of a stronger events system

System component	**What improves in practice**
Strategy and public value	Clear national direction makes investment decisions more transparent and defensible, with shared outcomes across government and partners.
Portfolio and pipeline	Earlier identification of opportunities, fewer reactive decisions, and a more balanced mix of events across regions, sectors, and seasons.
Investment and risk	Greater certainty for partners, better co-investment decisions, and more appropriate use of risk-sharing tools.
Stewardship and navigation	Easier entry into the system for organisers and partners, with clearer roles and faster decision-making.
Central–local partnership	Regions involved earlier, with clearer expectations on funding, delivery, and local benefits.
Regulation and delivery support	Fewer delays, more consistent processes, and lower transaction costs for event delivery.
Evaluation, leverage, and legacy	Better understanding of what works, stronger justification for investment, and more consistent delivery of long-term benefits.

Figure 3: Current versus future events system

TODAY	SHIFT	*FUTURE STATE*
No enduring strategy Event, fund and agency choice are not guided by one national direction		**Shared strategy** One enduring national direction and public-value framework
Partial portfolio view Public, business and regional opportunities are visible in parts, not as one pipeline		**Visible portfolio and pipeline** Priorities, prospects, major and business events, anchor events and leverage opportunities seen together
Uneven funding Although there is core funding for major and business events, short-term and temporary funds limit pipeline confidence		**Coordinated investment** Stable funding, clearer tiers and co-investment expectations, and selected risk sharing
Dispersed governance No recognised system steward or clear front door		**Clear stewardship** A recognised centre of gravity with portfolio visibility
Strained central-local interface Regions can be engaged late or under pressure		**Durable partnership** Earlier regional involvement, clearer roles, and agreed cost and risk sharing
Harder to navigate Regulatory and delivery requirements vary across place		**Practical delivery support** Guidance, protocols and targeted refreshes reduce avoidable friction
Narrower measurement Economic impact is easier to measure than wider public value		**Public-value evaluation** Event and portfolio outcomes measured more consistently

The strategic shift

The opportunity is to move from "New Zealand can deliver good events" to "New Zealand deliberately builds a portfolio of events that create public value." That is a different level of system maturity.

Building this future events system requires six key foundations. Each foundation responds to a specific challenge or weakness in the current system:

1. **A National Events Strategy** addresses the absence of an enduring organising direction, making it easier to explain priorities, assess trade-offs, and align partners.
2. **Coordinated investment and risk settings** address the problem of funding tools that are useful but not yet sufficient for long lead times, rising costs, business-event growth, selected risk-sharing, and long-term portfolio development.
3. **Clearer stewardship** responds to dispersed responsibilities, where governance and coordination depend too much on informal relationships, with no standing function responsible for having a view of public and business events as a national portfolio.
4. **A stronger central–local partnership** responds to the fact that central–local arrangements are currently often negotiated case by case, even though councils and their agencies have core hosting, regulatory, infrastructure, and co-investment responsibilities.
5. **Improved public–business coordination** responds to the opportunities missed when two strategically related event streams are planned through partly separate systems, despite overlapping contributions to trade, innovation, reputation, visitor demand, and sector development.
6. **Practical regulatory improvements** respond to avoidable friction in the delivery of events across regions, particularly when events are complex, are time-sensitive, or operate across multiple agencies and places.

The future system would not centralise all event activity. Individual organisations would retain specialist roles and relationships, but would work with a shared strategy, a visible forward pipeline, common tests for public value and additionality, earlier regional involvement in testing feasibility, and more integrated advice to decision makers. The national stewardship function would connect these elements and address gaps that individual organisations cannot readily resolve alone.

Foundation 1: A National Events Strategy

A National Events Strategy should be more than a branding exercise or statement of broad aspirations. It should provide the practical organising framework for the system.

It should clarify why government is involved in events, the outcomes New Zealand seeks, the event types and opportunities to be prioritised, how investment would be structured, and the roles different partners would play.

It would also identify choices and exclusions, to guide what government would not generally pursue as well as what it would support. Figure 4 describes the key elements that would be included in an effective strategy.

The Strategy would guide central government decisions and provide a shared framework to support alignment among other participants where their interests intersect. It would not direct all event activity across New Zealand or displace the mandates, strategies, and investment decisions of councils, sectors, event owners, iwi, communities, or commercial organisations.

Figure 4: Key elements of a National Events Strategy

Strategy must come first, because the key choices are interdependent

The reason strategy needs to come first is that the most important choices in the events system are interdependent. Decisions about funding levels, priority event types, risk-sharing for major events, business-event support, leverage expectations, institutional form, and regulatory support all depend on the level of ambition government is seeking for New Zealand's events system.

Without an agreed strategy, those choices are likely to be driven by individual funding bids, one-off opportunities, or institutional preferences, rather than by a transparent view of the public value New Zealand wants events to create. Establishing the strategy first will help prevent decisions about funding, institutions, or regulation being made before the system has agreed on what it is trying to achieve.

The strategy would inform and discipline agency and ministerial decisions, not replace them. Its value would be to make strategic fit, trade-offs, and any departures from agreed priorities more explicit. It should also be consistent with relevant government strategies and work programmes, including those covering the visitor economy, arts and culture, sport, trade and investment, and regional development.

Although government-led at the start, the strategy needs to become a shared system strategy

The strategy should be government-led at the outset because central government needs to clarify its own role, investment appetite, and public-value expectations.

However, it should be developed and progressively refined with the people who make the events system work: local government, regional agencies, iwi and Māori partners, the business-events sector, venues, industry associations, event organisers, promoters, and relevant central agencies.

It should become a shared system strategy over time – supporting greater alignment across the wider events system, while recognising that partners retain their own mandates, priorities, and decision rights.

Foundation 2: Coordinated investment and risk settings

Funding is not the only system lever, but it is one of the most important. Event markets operate over long lead times and are increasingly competitive. Rights fees, production costs, logistics, compliance, infrastructure needs, and delivery risk have all increased. At the same time, external partners increasingly seek certainty and speed. A strategy without adequate and well-designed investment settings would not be credible.

Status of funding scenarios

The funding ranges in this report are illustrative scenarios, not recommendations for appropriations or government commitments. They indicate the broad scale of investment that could be associated with different levels of ambition.

The appropriate level, composition, and timing of any additional investment would require separate policy development, detailed business cases, consideration of fiscal and delivery capacity, and decisions through normal Cabinet and Budget processes.

The National Events Strategy should first establish the outcomes sought, priorities, the role of government, and the level of ambition. Funding and institutional proposals should then be developed and assessed against those choices.

The recommended first step is **coordinated co-investment**. This would retain the important foundations of the MEF and CAP, but place them within a clearer structure. It would support stronger pipeline development, provide more deliberate business-event support, establish clearer principles for central–local co-investment, and introduce selected tools for risk-sharing where the public-value case is strong.

This review has modelled an "Enabling" investment scenario

The review proposes a pathway of three stages – Enabling, Maturing, and Championing (see Figure 7 on page 29). To illustrate the scale of choice involved, the review has modelled an Enabling investment scenario of approximately $25 million to $29 million per year over 2026/27 to 2028/29. The scenario extends across the Enabling and Maturing phases of the proposed pathway. This would represent a moderate uplift of around $11 million to $15 million per year on current core MEF and CAP settings. Any additional investment would be subject to strategy and fiscal decisions. The modelled range should be regarded as a foundation-building level of investment.

On the indicative comparisons used for this review, this scale of investment as a proportion of GDP would place New Zealand broadly alongside or above comparators such as Scotland, Wales, Denmark, and British Columbia, but it would not provide all the investment and system capability required for the more ambitious end-state. Its effects on the performance of the events system would depend on how effectively the funding was targeted, the quality of the available pipeline, and the system's capacity to deliver.

Providing the full modelled Enabling investment is not a prerequisite for beginning the Enabling phase. Some actions could be progressed through reprioritisation and greater coordination. However, any significant expansion of event support, prospecting, leverage and legacy activity, regional capability, or system infrastructure would require separate funding proposals.

A National Events Investment Platform would be a longer-term end-state

Subject to the ambition established through the National Events Strategy, and to further policy and fiscal analysis, the potential longer-term end-state would be a National Events Investment Platform. Potential key components of this platform are summarised in Table 6.

Table 6: Potential components of a National Events Investment Platform

Investment tier	**Purpose**
Core national event investment	Support major events and selected nationally significant event opportunities where additionality and public value are clear.
Business-event attraction and conversion	Increase the ability to identify, bid for, and secure international business events linked to priority sectors and wider strategic outcomes.
Prospecting and pipeline development	Support earlier identification, feasibility, and partner mobilisation before opportunities become time-critical.
Anchor-event growth	Support the development of selected regional or national anchor events where they can contribute to portfolio value and wider public outcomes.
Leverage and legacy	Fund proportionate activity that helps convert events into trade, innovation, cultural, social, regional, and reputational benefits.
Capability and system development	Build regional, sector, organisational, workforce, and volunteer capability, together with the coordination, data, evaluation, and guidance needed for stronger long-term performance.

This platform would be broader, more durable, and more sophisticated than the current funding architecture. It would allow New Zealand to invest across the event lifecycle, manage a portfolio, support business events more strategically, and use a wider mix of tools, including grants, subvention, risk-sharing, and targeted investment in capability.

The review has modelled annual central-government investment of approximately $40 million to $46 million for this platform, an uplift of around $26 million to $32 million per year on current core funding. This would represent a substantially higher level of ambition, especially if matched by more sustainable local or regional investment (for example, through a mechanism such as an accommodation levy or another sustainable funding source).[8] At this level, New Zealand's national investment would be closer in scale to that of leading event destinations such as Victoria, Queensland, and Singapore.

The comparator point is important. The higher end-state funding range is not intended simply to expand the number of events supported. It reflects the level of investment implied by an events system designed to compete more effectively, with earlier prospecting, credible bid and subvention tools, selective risk-sharing, stronger support for business events linked to priority sectors, dedicated leverage and legacy activity, better regional co-investment, and the capability needed to manage a national portfolio.

At lower funding levels, New Zealand can improve discipline and make better use of existing tools. It is unlikely, however, to match the certainty, speed, scale, and depth of portfolio offered by more mature competitor jurisdictions.

Under a portfolio approach, decision makers would still assess and approve individual proposals separately. Portfolio discipline means that each decision would also consider the multi-year pipeline, existing commitments, the desired mix of outcomes, regional and seasonal spread, delivery capacity, risk, and whether the opportunity fills a portfolio gap. Portfolio discipline may lead decision makers to support an individually attractive opportunity because it strengthens the overall portfolio, or to decline it because it duplicates existing value, creates excessive concentration, or cannot be delivered within available capacity.

The final level of investment should follow from the ambition and priorities established through the National Events Strategy, rather than being treated only as a budget choice. If New Zealand wants a more active, competitive, and strategic events system, the investment platform would need to be sized and designed accordingly. If the level of investment is lower, the strategy would need to be more selective and expectations should be adjusted.

8 If a higher-investment model were pursued, more sustainable local or regional event funding should also be considered as part of the overall funding and partnership model. An accommodation levy is one possible mechanism. Alternative local or regional funding mechanisms should be considered alongside any levy option. Any proposal would require separate policy development, analysis of economic and distributional effects, engagement with local government, the accommodation sector, and other affected parties, consideration of the range of purposes for which revenue might be used, and ministerial and legislative decisions.

Foundation 3: Clearer stewardship and system coordination

The future system needs a clear centre of gravity. This means establishing a recognised stewardship function, with the mandate, capability, and relationships to hold the national portfolio view and to connect partners, support decision makers, and provide a clear interface for the sector.

The current distribution of roles is understandable. MBIE has major-event responsibilities. Tourism New Zealand has responsibilities for attracting business events. Councils and regional agencies are central to hosting and delivery. Industry bodies support capability and coordination. Event owners, promoters, and organisers have commercial and delivery expertise. These roles are appropriate, but no single function is clearly responsible for connecting them across the national system.

A stewardship function should focus on nationally significant opportunities and activities that individual organisations cannot readily undertake alone, as summarised in Table 7. These functions would include maintaining a national pipeline and portfolio view; advising on strategic fit and public value; coordinating public and business-event opportunities; supporting prospecting; strengthening central–local partnership arrangements; helping government provide a no-wrong-door interface; improving evaluation; and building capability with industry partners.

National stewardship would not replace specialist prospecting, sector relationships, or local delivery. Sporting organisations, cultural bodies, business-event specialists, and regional partners would continue to identify and pursue opportunities within their areas of expertise.

Table 7: Stewardship functions

Function	**What it would do**
Portfolio stewardship	Maintain the national portfolio view, identify gaps and opportunities, support trade-offs, and provide Ministers and officials with clearer advice.
Pipeline and prospecting	Coordinate early opportunity identification across public events, business events, regions, and priority sectors, while recognising that specialist sector organisations and regional partners continue to lead relevant relationships and opportunity generation.
Partnership coordination	Support central–local partnership principles, early regional engagement, and consistent expectations for co-investment and delivery roles.
Investment advice	Apply public-value, additionality, risk, and portfolio tests across significant opportunities.
Leverage and legacy support	Help agencies and partners build wider outcomes into feasibility, planning, delivery, and evaluation. Ensure that material leverage and legacy outcomes have named owners, agreed partners, proportionate resources, milestones, and measures from feasibility through to post-event evaluation.
Industry interface	Provide a clearer no-wrong-door entry point and help event partners navigate government.

Over time, there may be merit in locating stewardship functions in an existing Crown entity or another arm's-length setting, rather than retaining all major-event functions within a departmental model.

This does not mean removing ministerial or departmental control over, or responsibility for, functions that properly require it, such as setting strategy, agreeing risk appetite, approving the largest or most sensitive commitments, and being accountable for major public expenditure. However, many of the day-to-day functions needed in a stronger events system are operational, commercial, and market-facing: these include prospecting, developing bids, managing the event portfolio, giving routine investment advice, engaging with industry, mobilising partners, and coordinating opportunities for leverage and legacy benefits.

An arm's-length setting would better support these functions because events markets are competitive, time-sensitive, and relationship-driven. Event owners, promoters, rights holders, venues, sponsors, regions, and business-event partners often need a counterpart that can move quickly, negotiate credibly, apply expert judgement consistently, and manage commercial information appropriately. A dedicated arm's-length function, operating within a strategy and fiscal parameters agreed by government, would be better placed to attract and retain specialist capability, maintain continuity across political and budget cycles, and provide a more credible industry interface than a conventional departmental unit.

Bringing major-event and business-event functions closer together within such a setting would also strengthen portfolio management. It would allow New Zealand to see major public events, international business events, and national anchor events as connected parts of a single national portfolio, while still retaining the distinct expertise each stream requires.

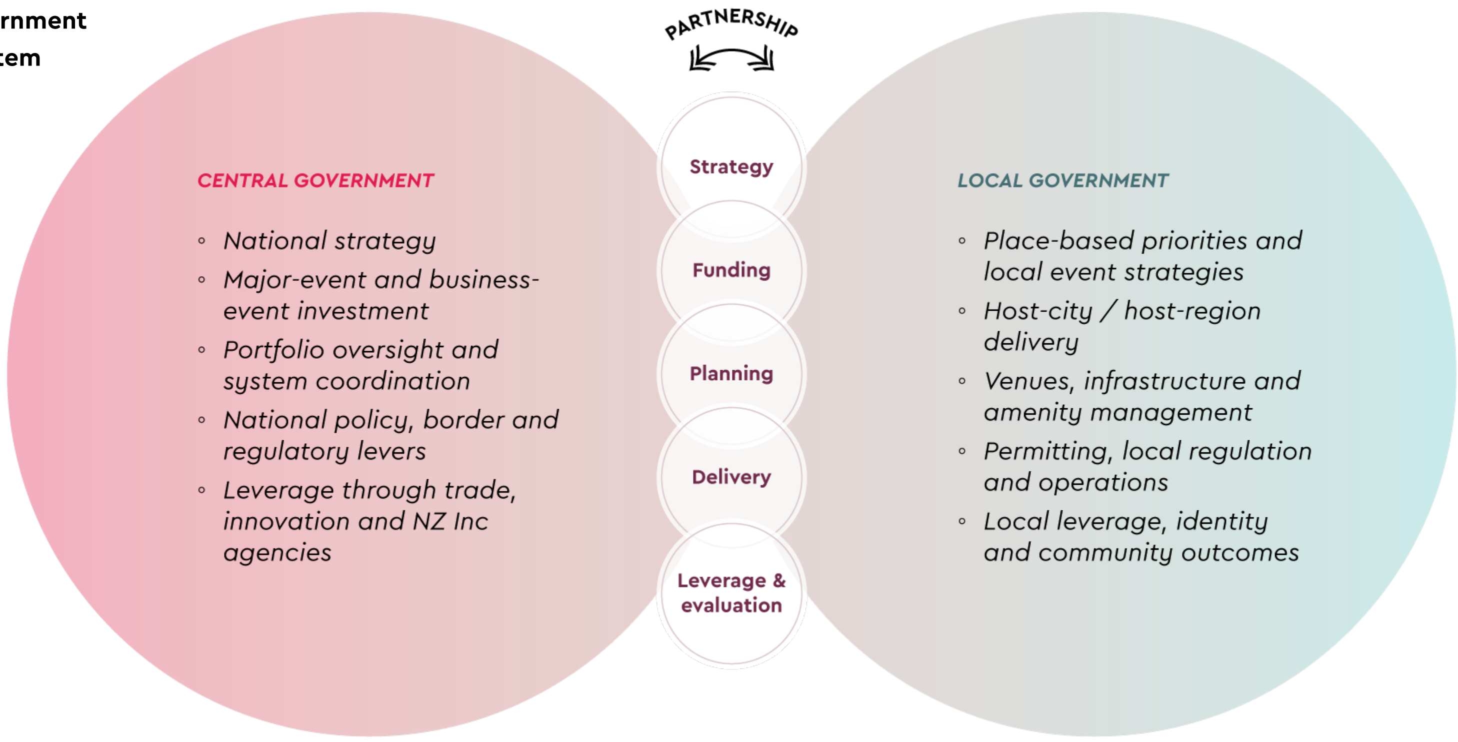
This is one institutional option rather than a predetermined end-state. The preferred location should be assessed during the Maturing phase against mandate, accountability, commercial agility, policy connection, capability, cost, continuity of expertise and relationships, and the ability to retain specialist public- and business-event capability.

Foundation 4: A stronger central–local partnership

Local government is central to the future of New Zealand's events system. Councils and their agencies provide venues, public spaces, regulatory processes, infrastructure, local funding, place-based knowledge, community connections, and destination development.

Councils and their agencies are not simply implementation partners for central government's decisions. They are co-designers of many significant event opportunities and play complementary roles in strategy, funding, planning, delivery, leverage, and evaluation, as shown in Figure 5.

Figure 5: Central and local government roles in the events system



The review found that the central–local interface around events is under pressure because national event decisions can have local funding, regulatory, infrastructure, operational, and community implications that require more than improved communication.

If local partners are brought in too late, the system risks committing to opportunities before feasibility, cost-sharing, delivery capacity, and local benefits have been properly tested. Conversely, regions and councils often see opportunities earlier than central government, including anchor events that could grow into nationally significant propositions. A stronger central–local partnership can ensure that national ambition and local deliverability are tested together from the start.

Stakeholders described additional pressure on the central–local relationship as national events ambition has increased while councils have faced fiscal constraints, competing priorities, uneven capability, and demands arising from wider local government reform.

Experience with initiatives such as the Events Attraction Package has highlighted some of these tensions. While stakeholders generally welcomed the additional funding and the intention of securing major event opportunities, several described the programme as operating quickly and outside standard funding processes, with limited local input in some cases. They reported that this created uncertainty about priorities, expectations, and respective central–local roles, particularly where local financial and operational commitments were required.

If central government wants a more ambitious national event portfolio, it needs to recognise the implications of that ambition for local capacity and funding. A stronger and more effective central–local government partnership model would have the features described in Table 8.

Greater national ambition should not unintentionally weaken the local and community-event base. National investment choices should recognise the differences in local co-investment and delivery capacity between places and should not assume that councils or communities can absorb additional responsibilities or maintain all existing activity without adequate resources.

Table 8: Features of a stronger central–local government partnership

Partnership issue	**Direction for improvement**
Early involvement	Bring relevant local and regional partners into prospecting and feasibility before national commitments become hard to unwind.
Co-investment expectations	Clarify when local financial or in-kind contributions are expected, how they are assessed, and how smaller regions can participate where national value is clear.
Risk and delivery roles	Set out who carries which risks, who leads which delivery functions, and how event commitments interact with local regulatory and venue responsibilities.
Sustainable local funding	Develop more durable local or regional funding mechanisms to support co-investment in events where national and local interests and benefits strongly intersect.
Regional balance	Use the portfolio view to consider regional spread, seasonality, venue readiness, and local capacity rather than treating each opportunity in isolation.

A stronger partnership model would preserve local choice. Councils and regions still need to be able to decide what fits their communities, infrastructure, priorities, and fiscal position. The goal is a more transparent partnership involving earlier engagement, clearer expectations, more consistent principles, and better alignment between national ambition and local capacity.

Foundation 5: Coordinating public and business events

Business events should be treated as a core part of the national events system. They have different market dynamics from public-facing events, but they can create significant public value.

International conferences, conventions, and incentive events bring high-value visitors. They can also connect New Zealand firms, researchers, universities, professional communities, and priority sectors to international networks. They can support trade, investment, innovation, and the exchange of knowledge.

Public and business events should not be merged into a single category. They operate in different markets and need different expertise. However, they should be managed as connected parts of one national portfolio, as shown in Figure 6. That means a shared strategy, a common public-value framework, better visibility of the pipeline, stronger links to priority sectors, and coordinated leverage planning where opportunities overlap.

This shift is important because business events can be less visible than major public events but strategically important. A conference in a priority sector may not attract the same public attention as a major sporting event or festival, but it may generate valuable business, research, and investment links. Conversely, a major public event may create international profile and visitor value, but need deliberate leverage to connect that attention to business or sector outcomes. A connected portfolio allows both types of value to be considered together.

Figure 6: How public and business events can be better connected

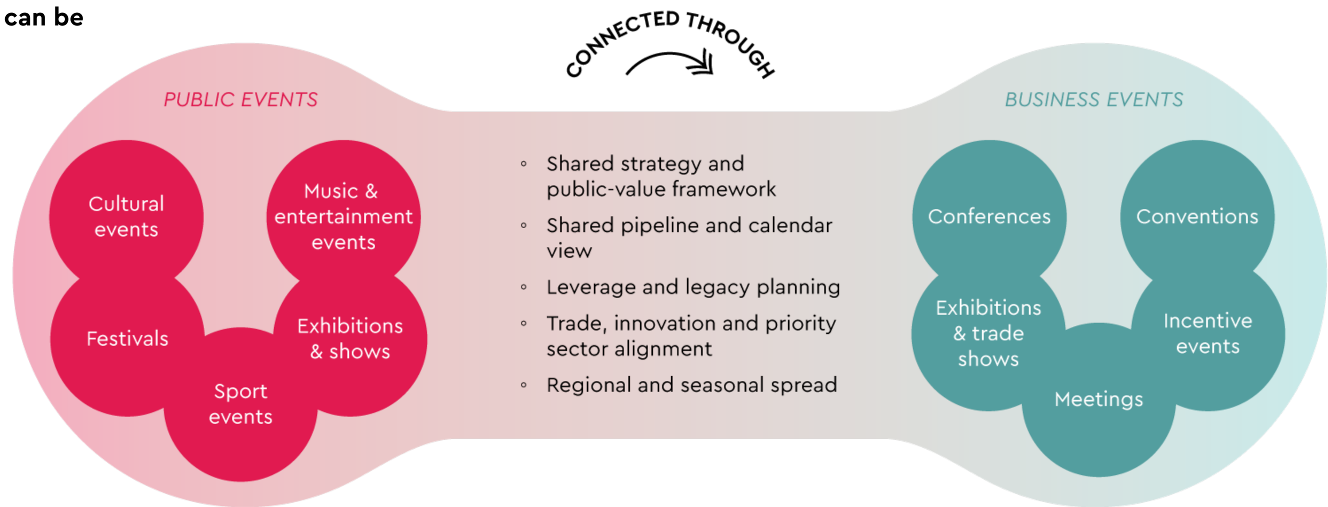


Table 9 summarises the key changes that are required to improve the interface between public and business events.

Table 9: Key changes to improve the coordination of public and business events

What changes	**Why it matters**
Business events are included in the National Events Strategy.	They become part of the same public-value and portfolio conversation as other nationally significant event opportunities.
Pipeline information is connected.	New Zealand can see upcoming business-event prospects alongside major public events, regional priorities, and sector opportunities.
Priority-sector links are made explicit.	Bid support can be aligned with trade, research, innovation, and investment opportunities.
Distinct expertise is leveraged.	Business-event specialists continue to lead market-specific attraction and bidding while operating within and supporting the wider national framework.

Foundation 6: Practical regulatory improvement

Regulation is not the primary driver of events strategy, but it can directly affect the cost, timing, and ease of event delivery. Event organisers often operate across multiple permits, agencies, local rules, public-space requirements, health and safety expectations, traffic management, alcohol licensing, environmental requirements, and other controls. Many of these requirements are legitimate. The main difficulties arise from variability, uncertainty, and avoidable complexity in how they are interpreted and administered.

The practical priority should be to make regulation easier to navigate and more consistent where large-scale events are involved. As summarised in Table 10, this means national guidance, model approaches, protocols, expert support, and stronger capability for local authorities dealing with complex events. It also means considering regulatory expectations early in the feasibility process, rather than discovering them late in delivery.

Table 10: Enhancements to the regulatory framework for events

Regulatory priority	**Recommended approach**
Navigation	Provide clearer guidance and a no-wrong-door pathway for organisers and partners dealing with government requirements.
Consistency	Develop model local approaches and protocols for recurring regulatory issues where inconsistency creates avoidable cost or uncertainty.
Capability	Support local authorities and event partners with expertise for complex or nationally significant events.
MEMA refresh	Update the Major Events Management Act in a targeted way before considering broader legislative reform.
Early feasibility	Bring regulatory considerations into prospecting and feasibility decisions so risks and costs are understood early.

The Major Events Management Act 2007 continues to be a useful tool for protecting certain rights and commercial interests around major events. However, it is narrow and increasingly dated compared with the wider operating environment. A targeted refresh should focus on future-readiness, declaration processes, enforcement, and alignment with contemporary event models. Broader event-enabling legislation should only be considered if practical improvements and targeted changes to the Major Events Management Act prove insufficient.

The recommended pathway: Enabling first, with a Championing ambition

The recommended pathway is staged because the full end-state depends on foundations that are not yet in place. Moving immediately to a large new investment platform or dedicated stewardship model would create risks if the strategy, public-value framework, central–local arrangements, pipeline information, and decision rights were not yet settled.

Equally, minor improvements would not equip New Zealand to pursue the available opportunities. The staged pathway balances the intended level of ambition with the system's readiness to deliver it.

Enabling to Maturing to Championing

The proposed staging is:

- **Enabling** – beginning in 2026/27 and extending into 2027/28; focussed on strategy, initial pipeline visibility, public-value criteria, interim coordination, central–local principles, and practical regulatory improvements within the existing broad arrangements.
- **Maturing** – over 2027/28 to 2028/29; applying and refining the Strategy and public-value framework, testing portfolio and partnership arrangements, building evidence and data, evaluating the Enabling phase, and developing any future funding or institutional proposals.
- **Championing** – from 2029/30 onwards; subject to evidence from the earlier phases and to an agreed Strategy, demonstrated delivery capacity, viable central–local arrangements, detailed policy and institutional design, and government decisions on funding and implementation.

Figure 7 outlines the key features of each stage of the pathway.

The suggested pathway allows some actions to be brought forward if Ministers want to move faster. Examples include stronger prospecting, additional business-event support, additional leverage and legacy funding, targeted support for selected anchor events, and more explicit portfolio treatment of investment decisions.

However, acceleration should not undermine sequencing. If the system moves faster, it will need the implementation capability to do this well.

Progression to the Championing phase would not be automatic. It should happen only if review points show that the enabling arrangements are improving the events system's performance and if the necessary funding, capability, partnership, and institutional conditions can be met.

This review recommends a direction and a staged pathway rather than a predetermined funding or institutional package.

The final scale of investment, the form and location of stewardship functions, any new local or regional funding mechanism, and the timing of any move towards a Championing model would be subject to further policy development and government decisions.

Figure 7: Pathway from Enabling to Championing

ENABLING → **MATURING** → **CHAMPIONING**

ENABLING
2026–2027

- National Events Strategy – government-led
  - Public-value framework
  - National pipeline and calendar
  - Co-investment foundations
- Modest increase in MEF and CAP support
- No-wrong-door government interface
- Regulatory guidance
- Targeted MEMA refresh

MATURING
2027–2029

- Evolve the Strategy into a system-wide strategy
  - Test and refine funding tools
  - Design the stewardship function
- Assess regulatory progress
- Build portfolio performance measures
- Strengthen regional readiness

CHAMPIONING
2029–2030 onwards

- System-wide National Events Strategy
- National Events Investment Platform
- National stewardship function in place
- Integrated public-business events portfolio
- Durable local co-investment mechanism in place
- Stronger prospecting, leverage, legacy and evaluation

What the Enabling and Maturing phases should deliver

The Enabling and Maturing phases should be judged by whether they make the system more deliberate, more connected, and easier to use.

The Enabling phase should not be used to solve every system challenge immediately. Instead, it should create the minimum foundations that the future model will require and deliver practical improvements that matter to partners now.

Key deliverables and indicators of success for the Enabling and Maturing phases are provided in Table 11.

> **Enabling is substantive reform**
>
> The Enabling phase is a substantive programme of reform that creates the foundations for a more ambitious end-state.

Table 11: Enabling and Maturing phase deliverables and indicators of success

Priority	**What should be delivered**	**What success looks like**
National Events Strategy	A government-led strategy developed through a cross-agency and partner process involving relevant expertise from the events, visitor, sport, cultural, and trade sectors, as well as iwi and Māori, local government, and regional partners. The strategy would cover public events, business events, and selected anchor-event opportunities.	Clear direction, public-value tests, portfolio logic, and investment principles are in place.
Public-value framework	A common basis for assessing economic, visitor, trade, innovation, cultural, social, regional, and reputational outcomes.	Investment advice moves beyond narrow event-by-event economics without losing discipline.
Pipeline and calendar view	A national view of committed events, prospects, regional priorities, venue capacity, and business-event opportunities.	Partners can see the portfolio and plan around opportunities and gaps.
Coordinated co-investment	A clearer funding architecture, stronger business-event support, and co-investment principles with councils and regions.	Partners understand the conditions for support and the role expected of each party.
No-wrong-door interface	Clearer navigation for event owners, rights holders, organisers, regions, and industry partners.	The sector has a more coherent way into government.
Regulatory guidance and MEMA refresh	Practical guidance, model approaches, and targeted legislative improvement.	Regulatory friction is reduced and future major events are better supported.
Leverage and legacy discipline	Early identification of material wider outcomes, named owners, delivery partners, proportionate resources, milestones, and measures for high-value events.	Public-value outcomes are considered from the beginning of event feasibility and investment decisions.

The Enabling and Maturing phases should also provide early confidence to the events sector. Even without a full end-state, partners should see practical changes, such as clearer explanations about public value, a better sense of national priorities, more predictable pathways for support, earlier involvement of regions, better recognition of business events, and a system that is more coherent and better connected.

What the Championing model would mean

A Championing model would represent a more mature and active role for government, but would not imply central government control of the events sector. It would provide New Zealand with the strategy, investment platform, stewardship function, and partnership settings needed to compete more effectively and capture greater public value from the events it chooses to support.

Under a Championing model, the stewardship function would become involved earlier and play a more active role throughout the event lifecycle. It would identify prospects, work with regions and industry before opportunities are fully formed, connect event opportunities to national priorities, and use investment tools that better match the realities of the market. It would hold the portfolio view and make more deliberate choices about the mix of public events, business events, and anchor opportunities. Table 12 describes the key features of the model.

Table 12: Key features of the Championing model

Feature of the Championing model	**Practical implication**
National Events Investment Platform	A broader, durable, and more flexible platform able to support prospecting, bids, attraction, growth, leverage, legacy, capability, and selected risk-sharing.
Recognised stewardship function	A clear system lead with enough mandate and capability to hold the portfolio view and coordinate partners.
Integrated public–business portfolio	Business events are connected to the wider event strategy while retaining specialist market capability.
Durable central–local arrangements	Co-investment, local funding, venue readiness, delivery roles, and regional priorities are considered through standing principles rather than one-off negotiation.
Stronger leverage and legacy	Wider outcomes are planned and resourced from feasibility, with accountable owners and credible performance measures.
Better industry interface	Event partners face a more coherent and commercially credible system, with a no-wrong-door entry point and stronger navigation.

Note: the features above describe the functions expected of a mature system. They do not presume a particular level of funding, revenue mechanism, institutional form, or allocation of responsibilities.

Principles for implementation

The review suggests that implementation should be guided by three core principles: sequencing, practicality, and credibility with partners. Together, these principles help ensure that reform is both ambitious and deliverable. The implementation requirements in Table 13 represent the practical disciplines that support these principles.

Principle 1: Sequencing

The Championing model should proceed only when key foundations are in place, including a National Events Strategy, a functioning public-value framework, better pipeline visibility, tested central–local partnership arrangements, and greater clarity around stewardship functions and institutional design.

Achieving this requires strong programme discipline to maintain a coherent pathway across multiple workstreams, and clarity about decision rights so that participants understand who is responsible for routine, strategic, and high-risk decisions. Without these disciplines, there is a risk that the Championing model becomes simply additional funding or new structures without the supporting system settings needed to invest effectively.

Principle 2: Practicality

Despite the need for sequencing, the system does not need to wait for a perfect model before making progress. Several improvements can begin immediately and evolve over time as the broader system matures.

A national pipeline view can start with imperfect information, a no-wrong-door interface can initially operate as a coordination protocol, and leverage and legacy considerations can be embedded in investment processes before all measurement issues are resolved.

Delivering practical improvements early will build confidence and demonstrate that the reforms are improving how the system works.

Principle 3: Credibility with partners

The events sector, councils, organisers, venues, and other partners will judge the success of reform by whether it improves their experience of working with government and makes better use of the time and funding they invest. If the pathway produces clearer priorities, earlier engagement, more predictable funding pathways, and a better interface, it will build confidence. If it produces only more process, it will not.

Table 13: Implementation requirements and actions

Implementation requirement	Principle	Why it matters	Early practical action
Programme discipline	Sequencing	The work spans several policy and delivery areas and needs to be held together.	Establish a small cross-agency implementation group with clear ownership of strategy, investment, and stewardship design.
Clarity about decision rights	Sequencing	Speed and credibility require knowing who can decide what and when.	Map routine, high-risk, and strategic decisions and identify where delegation or ministerial approval is appropriate.
Early wins	Practicality	The sector needs to see that the pathway is practical, not only conceptual.	Create an interim no-wrong-door process, begin a pipeline view, and embed leverage prompts into funding advice.
Integration with existing work	Practicality	Reform should build on, not duplicate, related programmes.	Map dependencies with current MBIE and cross-agency work.
Partner involvement	Credibility with partners	The system depends on councils, regions, industry, venues, iwi and Māori partners, and business-event specialists.	Agree proportionate engagement points for industry, local government, iwi and Māori, relevant agencies, and private partners at strategy, feasibility, and investment stages.
Evidence and learning	Credibility with partners	The model needs to mature based on performance and partner experience.	Set baseline measures and review points, and feed the results into subsequent portfolio and investment decisions.

This requires genuine involvement of partners in designing and testing new approaches, including public-value criteria, navigation arrangements, and co-investment settings. It also requires a commitment to evidence and learning, with baseline measures, review points, and feedback mechanisms used to refine the model over time.

The expected benefits

If this review's recommended approach is implemented effectively and supported by appropriate investment, the potential benefits would be at two levels.

The first is **event-level value** – securing more high-value events, ensuring better leverage of supported events, generating stronger business-event results, and creating greater visitor, regional, social, cultural, and reputational benefits.

The second is **system-level value** – creating an events system that is more confident, coordinated, and credible, and that can make better decisions over time.

Event-level value

A stronger events system would support growth in the visitor economy

Illustrative modelling suggests that the investment scenarios examined could deliver significant increases in international visitor numbers and expenditure, as well as more business-event bids with substantial potential value.

Under the modelled Enabling scenario, the estimates include 8,000 to 9,500 more international visitors a year, up to approximately $32 million in additional international visitor expenditure through increased support for major events, and 40 to 60 additional business-event bids with an estimated bid value of $90 million to $140 million, before allowing for bid conversion.

Under the higher Championing investment scenario, the modelling estimates 18,500 to 21,500 additional international visitors per year, approximately $64 million to $74 million in additional visitor expenditure annually, and around 150 international business-event bids per year with an estimated bid value of $350 million.

These figures are scenario estimates, not forecasts or guaranteed returns. They are based on average historical outcomes and available industry information. Actual outcomes would depend on the quality and additionality of supported opportunities, bid conversion, visitor origin, displacement and substitution, public and private costs, capability and infrastructure constraints, portfolio composition, and the effectiveness of leverage activity.

A stronger system would also provide broader value – economic, strategic, social, and cultural

Beyond these potential results for the visitor economy, a stronger system is expected to create broader economic, strategic, social, and cultural value.

This includes strengthening trade, investment, research, and innovation connections; improving the regional and seasonal distribution of benefits; supporting cultural expression and national pride; and enhancing New Zealand's international profile and relationships.

More deliberate leverage and legacy planning should help ensure that major events leave lasting benefits through capability development, knowledge transfer, volunteer development, stronger organisational capability, and deeper connections across sectors and regions.

Over time, these wider and longer-term outcomes should reinforce the role of events as strategic assets that contribute well beyond visitor attraction.

System-level value

Success would include visible improvements in how our events system functions

Effective implementation should also produce visible changes in how the events system works and behaves.

By 2030, New Zealand should be able to point to a National Events Strategy that is actively guiding decisions, a clearer portfolio and pipeline view, stronger integration of public and business events, more consistent central–local partnerships, and practical improvements in how the sector navigates government.

Ministers should receive advice that routinely considers strategic fit, public value, additionality, regional implications, risk, leverage, and portfolio trade-offs. Officials should be able to see the national pipeline and understand where opportunities fit. Councils and regional agencies should be involved earlier and should have clearer expectations about co-investment and delivery roles. Industry should experience a system that is more coherent and more commercially credible.

By 2034, New Zealand should be competing more consistently for the events it wants, converting more business-event opportunities that are linked to national priorities, creating better leverage and legacy benefits from supported events, and demonstrating value across a wider set of measures. The system should be more mature, evidence-driven, and resilient across political and fiscal cycles.

A stronger, future-ready events system

New Zealand has a real opportunity to build a stronger, more future-ready events system.

It has the reputation, people, places, creativity, and delivery capability to compete, along with existing funding and business-event mechanisms that it can build on. There is national and regional ambition and substantial industry capability. There is also a clear reason to act. Competition for events is increasing, their value extends well beyond visitor expenditure, and the current system is not yet organised to realise the full opportunity.

Success would mean that New Zealand is consistently competing for and securing a larger share of high-value events aligned with our national priorities, while also demonstrating public value across visitor, trade, innovation, cultural, social, regional, and reputational outcomes.

The system would be easier to work with and explain, and better able to turn event opportunities into lasting value for New Zealand.

Final message

A more effective national events system would deliver more than a stronger events calendar. The prize is a system that is more deliberate, competitive, and connected, with greater capability to create lasting public value.

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