



EVENTS NOVA SCOTIA

Inspiring times

CHAPTER 3: GETTING STARTED

You will need a strong start-up committee to get things going. One of the most important decisions will be selecting a site or venues for the festival.

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The Start-Up Committee

Once you have completed the planning steps outlined in Chapter 2, it's time to get started with organizing. You need a committee if you haven't already got one.

The initial organizing group may be an ad hoc group that gets the event started and then hands it over to a longer-term board of directors to oversee implementation. Conversely, the board of directors may be established right away. Either way, the initial group needs to have the following kinds of people involved:

- The visionary(s) – the person/people who had the creativity in coming up with the original idea and can build commitment to the concept
- Champions – enthusiastic supporters who are also influential in the community
- Leaders – people who can organize, motivate, and get things done
- Sellers – people who are good at going out and selling the event to target sponsors and partners
- Influencers – people who can build and maintain support with key organizations in the community that are important to the event's success
- Doers – people that can be depended on to get things done and are willing to do anything that needs to be done

This initial group will likely become your board of directors. Chapter 7 talks about the board, management, and other team members.

Selecting a Site

Many variables can make or break a festival, and choosing a site is perhaps one of the most important decisions.

Desired Features

In looking for a site, consider the following:

- Suitability for the experience and program you are planning
- Access for visitors and suppliers
- Impact on the community and surrounding communities
- Adequate capacity and resources for your audience
- Services available
- Options in case of bad weather
- Local sensitivities or issues
- Timing — is the site available for a sufficient time for setup and teardown?

Helpful Tip: Assessing Venues

Other considerations when looking at venue options:

- *Does the venue have the right physical capabilities – wash rooms, enough seating, suitable stage, ramps, etc.?*
- *Is it a positive central gathering place for the community?*
- *Is it a good fit for what you are planning? If the occasion is a small intimate concert, the local arena or school gym might not be the best spot.*
- *Talk to the fire marshal, particularly when looking at an indoor venue, to find out about restrictions that might impact your ability to use venues or their capacity.*

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The site must have a positive impact on the community to ensure a healthy future for your event. The festival concept may be wonderful, and you and your board of directors may expect positive impacts in the form of economic benefits from increased tourism to your area, but if this comes at a price of blocked roads where residents aren't able to get to local shops, loud music that can be heard in people's basements, and restricted or blocked access to parks, then community support can quickly turn sour and any promised economic impacts, forgotten.

Festival sites can successfully be planned for the centre of a town or city complete with road closures, restricted street parking, and music, as long as the community is well aware of all the impacts. Festival organizers must respect noise by-laws and other regulations and make sure residents can access their homes, businesses, and parking.

You may, on the other hand, find it's better to have the festival or event outside of town.

Traffic Control and Parking Capacity

Traffic control and parking capacity can be big issues. Think about the following when considering a festival site:

- Will access to the site and parking be an issue? Is there a left-hand turn from or onto a busy street? You may be required to hire police officers to direct traffic if that is the case.
- Is there parking available on-site for all visitors? You will need a plan if the site fills up.
- Can you post signage on the highways leading to the site?

- Can you install directional signage on local streets to guide visitors to the site and parking areas?
- Is there a secondary access to the site for suppliers, staff, volunteers, and entertainers?
- If parking on-site is for staff and volunteers, concession operators, handicapped visitors, and entertainers only, you will need lots of signs leading up to the site that direct general visitors to off-site parking. Make sure the accreditation for the vehicles allowed on-site is easy to read for trouble-free parking.
- Is there room for a drop-off and pickup area? This needs to be strictly supervised so it doesn't become a parking lot.
- If you are operating a shuttle service to a parking area, make sure the way in and out, and the pickup/drop-off area, is not congested so the shuttle can run smoothly.
- Are tour buses expected? Where will they drop off, pick up, and park?
- If you are using a field or other unpaved area for parking, what are the options if it rains for a week before, or during, your event?
- If you are charging for parking, make sure the signage is plentiful and clear before visitors enter the parking area. Also ensure there is adequate room for them to turn around or keep moving forward if they choose to park elsewhere.

Work closely with the local parking enforcement authority to determine parking options. Ensure any additional traffic restrictions on surrounding streets are well marked.

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Shuttle Service

Shuttles can ease up congestion around your festival site and move visitors efficiently. Make sure you clearly communicate to your audiences ahead of time that this kind of service (and its schedule) is available. As well, ensure you have plenty of signage leading to the parking area and pick-up/drop-off points for the shuttle service.

A shuttle bus should normally be a free service for your visitors. The best schedule will vary depending on the event, the time of day, and unique challenges. For some events, a shuttle will need to run at least every 15 minutes. At others, frequent shuttles before and after a major program will be required. Whatever you plan, make sure it operates late enough to get everyone back to their vehicles at the end of the event.

Weather

You can't control the weather, but you can plan for it. Where will the crowds go in case of rain? Will they huddle under food concession tents until the rain stops? Can the shuttle service get them back to their cars quickly? Do you have the possibility of re-scheduling? Can you move a concert or other element of programming to an indoor facility?

The best way to keep your audience members up to date is via social media. The moment you know you need to change programming or a venue, update your website, Facebook page, Twitter, etc. and notify local radio stations. Remember to keep your staff, volunteers, and vendors fully informed.

Let your volunteers and vendors know that, in the case of any inclement weather, a mass email to all parties will be sent out. Tell them to keep an eye on the event's social media pages as well for the most up-to-date information. This may be the most efficient way to communicate and avoid a rush of phone calls to your office and staff.

On the other end of the spectrum, you may be unexpectedly overwhelmed with visitors if the weather is hot and sunny. Will you be ready for 20,000 people at your gate when you were expecting 5,000? Consider what will be needed for on-site concessions, drinking water, and portable washrooms.



Services

A festival site may have everything you are looking for in terms of parking, size, and sufficient separation from the neighbours, but if it doesn't have services, you could be adding unforeseen expenses to your operating budget. Here are some things to watch for:

- Does the site have sufficient electrical service? Does it have enough capacity for your staging, concessions, lighting, and other needs? Will you need to rent generators?
- Is there adequate existing lighting?

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- Is the site on the local bus service route, or will all your visitors have to arrive by car? If there is bus service, what time does it start/finish?
- What is the drainage situation? If it rains for days before the festival, will there be a big pool in the middle of the field where your stage is supposed to go?
- How will the fire department access water in case of a fire on-site?
- What about access for fire engines, ambulances, and police vehicles?
- Is the ground level and easy for visitors to walk around? Can wheelchairs move freely?
- Are there washrooms on-site, or do you have to rent a portable washroom service? Are there sufficient hand-washing stations?

Don't forget you will need inspections for some licences and regulations. These are addressed in Chapter 4.

Festival Office/Logistical Facilities/ Volunteer and Staff Space

Festival Office

Your on-site festival office may be an actual office structure, a trailer, or a tent. Whichever you choose, ensure you have access to power and Wi-Fi. Depending on the security of your office, other equipment, such as a printer, may be useful. Always ensure you have a secure area for storing valuables and that only the right people have access to it.

Helpful Tip: Happy Volunteers

Food and water can go a long way to keeping your volunteers happy. Talk to some local businesses – they may be prepared to donate water and food in recognition of the hard work being done by festival volunteers.

Advertise your event on Volunteer Nova Scotia and gain access to thousands of potential volunteers
(<http://volunteers.ca>).

Volunteer and Staff Space

Volunteers and staff generally put in long hours at festival time. They are busy and on their feet most of the time. It's good to have a separate area, away from the hustle and bustle and unending demands on them, for them to eat, relax, and socialize. One of the perks of working at or volunteering at festivals is the camaraderie that is created. A welcoming and comfortable gathering area can help facilitate this.

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Logistical Facilities

The logistics staff and volunteers are the crew that pull the festival together, literally from the ground up. They install fencing and barricades, move tables, set up tents, place trailers, help with stage equipment, erect signage, and a million other hands-on details. They also need a secure location to store equipment, supplies, and tools.

Storage and Holding Area

Some equipment and supplies will need to be stored. Valuable items will need to be in a secure area while others can be stored in a tent or under a tarp. You may be able to use existing facilities or rent a tent or trailer. Portable storage units are a cost-effective and useful option for many events.

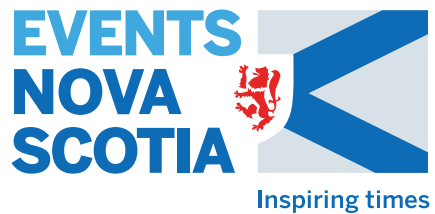
Security staff may have to be contracted a few days before the site opens because of the value of stored items. Security will have to be kept in the loop as to what is on-site and when deliveries are expected. Most importantly, they will need to know who has the authority to remove items from the site.

Key Takeaways

Establish your start-up committee and get the right people involved – visionaries, champions, leaders, sellers, and doers.

Look for sites and venues that are a good fit with your festival experience. Also, think about traffic and parking, weather impacts, and the space and services the festival will need.





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