



EVENTS NOVA SCOTIA

Inspiring times

CHAPTER 12: POST-EVENT EVALUATION AND PLANNING FOR THE FUTURE

When the festival is over, it's not really over. You still have things to do to make sure it goes more easily and successfully next time around.

Evaluating Attendance and Economic Impacts

Post-event evaluation will help you plan for next year and will give you the information you need to report to current sponsors and partners, and to approach new ones. By engaging with them on your results, they can also help you build a strategy for the future of your festival.

There are several ways to evaluate the outcomes of the festival; some are done during the event, others afterward.

Tracking the Number of Visitors and Other Data

This may be obvious, but it's important to keep track of how many visitors you get. Keeping track of visitors at gated events is straightforward, but it can be more complex if you have no admission fees. Here are a couple of ways to approach this:

- Use people counters – either electronic counters or volunteers who count people in various locations.
- Give out bracelets or tickets to people as they enter – even though it's a free event, you will likely still need to know how many people are entering for fire occupancy limits and this will also give you attendance data.

Also record and summarize information about the other numbers associated with the festival such as revenues, operating costs, sponsorships, partner contributions, etc. This will be vital to maintaining and building support in the future.

Surveying Visitors

Survey your visitors either online after the event using tools such as Survey Monkey (<https://www.surveymonkey.com/>) or while they are on-site using tools such as Quick Tap Surveys (<http://www.quicktap-survey.com/>). You want to find out the following:

- Where they live
- Whether they travelled specifically for your festival or event
- Basic party characteristics and demographics
- How they heard about your festival/event
- What motivated them to visit
- How satisfied they were with the overall festival and its various elements
- Whether they plan to return
- How much they spent while in the area
- Their email address and permission to send them information on your next festival

You need some of this information to do the economic impact analysis (see discussion below). Other parts will help you assess your marketing activities, and some will help you fine tune your event for future years. If you have the resources, consider contracting this to a professional, at least for the first couple of years.

Measuring Economic Impacts

Measuring, recording, and reporting the economic benefits of the festival is vital for maintaining support, particularly from public agencies that want to see what the economic ROI has been. Providing this data will keep your event from sliding into their

CHAPTER 11: MARKETING YOUR EVENT

“discretionary spending” category and will help ensure you get funding for next year’s event.

The Canadian Sport Tourism Alliance (CSTA; <http://canadiansport-tourism.com/>) has three economic impact assessment (EIA) tools (<https://canadiansporttourism.com/industry-tools/industry-tools.html>). There are two models designed for sports events (STEAM 2.0 and STEAM PRO 2.0), and one specifically for festivals or other events (FEST PRO). You need to be a member of CSTA to use the models or contract them to do so for you, but membership costs are reasonable and will give you access to many other valuable resources, particularly for major events. If you operate a major festival or event, Events Nova Scotia can assist you in using these EIA tools.

To use these tools, you need to have various pieces of information about your visitors/spectators and participants, including where they are from, how long they stayed, and the role the event played in their travel. To get this information, you will need to survey your visitors/ participants, either during or after the event.

If you are a smaller event or can’t get the information needed for the EIA, we suggest you record and report the following (sources are in brackets):

- Attendance volumes (gate counts)
- Tourist attendance (from a visitor survey)
- Revenues from on-site spending of all visitors (admission and other on-site revenues)
- Other spending in the community by tourists (as reported on the visitor survey)
- Number of people employed by the festival and the wages and salaries paid to them
- Taxes paid by the festival

You might also want to report on other impacts of a beneficial nature to the community, such as

- pleasure, fun, entertainment, community pride, visits from friends and relatives, and other benefits resident attendees gained
- facilities added or improved in the community as a consequence of festival

Evaluating the Event

Check back with the vision and goals you established. Are you on track to achieve them? If not, perhaps you need to modify the event or some elements in subsequent years.

One method we recommend is “management by walking around” so you can witness for yourself what is working and what isn’t. Do this in an organized fashion with daily reports from festival management people who are mandated to make on-site tours on a scheduled basis.



CHAPTER 11: MARKETING YOUR EVENT

Keeping Your Friends

The partners and sponsors who worked with you the first time need to be encouraged to keep supporting you in the future. You can accomplish this with the following kinds of initiatives:

- Follow up with sponsors and partners. This is vital to make sure the festival is meeting their goals and to explore how to better meet them next year.
- Show them evidence of their ROI. A document outlining media coverage, where their logo or name was used, attendance and marketing reach should be sent out to all sponsors at the end of the event.
- Demonstrate how much you appreciate the relationship, either through one-on-one initiatives, or by organizing a collective appreciation event after the festival. This could take the form of a dinner, a group outing, or some other event.

Keep in mind that a “partnership” is more than a contract. Strong partnerships take into consideration the future and are designed to achieve a lasting relationship of mutual benefit. This is especially true with community partnerships.

You should also meet with your other partners, municipal support departments, and other community stakeholders to give and receive debriefs. And, don't forget to debrief with the board of directors and committees.

Helpful Tip: Keeping Friends

A follow-up meeting even before all the statistics are collected can be a good idea. This engages your sponsors and partners in a healthy feedback process. When you report later, they will be happy to see their words or concerns immediately considered for planning of the next edition.

Try to anticipate and pre-empt problems and offer positive solutions from the start.

Countering Volunteer Burnout

Volunteers play a major role in festivals, particularly with community festivals that often have few, if any, staff. Volunteer burnout is a real challenge. Burnout happens when you don't have enough volunteers to share the load and this leads to a few people being expected to do too much. Unchecked, this can lead to an unravelling of the festival organization and the quality of the event going downhill.

To counter volunteer burnout, you need to commit to regularly attracting and developing new people. As discussed in Chapter 7, having a volunteer recognition program in place can help, one that celebrates volunteers' contribution and showcases them as valuable community members.

Building on Success - Growing and Improving the Festival

Having too much success too fast can be dangerous. Take care to build on success in a controlled fashion, with each new step being carefully considered, planned, and implemented. Add only a few innovations each year so they can be implemented without undermining other activities.

How do you balance the “change, but not too fast” issue? It’s simple in concept, but less so in reality. Move ahead with opportunities, but don’t take on too much all at once. Organizing an event is a major balancing act.

At the same time, be open to positive change. Change can renew and refresh your festival and your organization as well. This strengthens the appeal of the event among past visitors. It counters the “been there, done that” attitude.

Keeping your event fresh and exciting is vital for success, but don’t forget your roots or who and what you are. Stay true to your original objectives or you may lose your reason for being, and your supporters as well. That isn’t to say that you should never revisit your objectives and revise them based on new realities or new opportunities.

Doing a full debrief with all your stakeholders is imperative should you decide to repeat the event. Set up several meetings with the

- executive/lead organizers
- on-site team (including security, technical/AV)
- lead volunteers
- board of directors

Send out emails for input to vendors, sponsors, and attendees. As mentioned before, call your sponsors to find out how they felt things went and to gauge their interest in returning.

Don’t forget to fill out any wrap reports for government funding. Many hold a portion of funds back until after the event and wrap reports are received.

Once all of this is done, have your team analyze the data and talk about what worked and what didn’t. If everyone agrees it’s an event worth doing again, you’ll be ready to build on your existing success.

Key Takeaways

Tracking and understanding your visitors through visitor surveys provides important information for future planning and marketing.

Measuring, recording, and reporting economic impacts can be vital to maintaining support, particularly from public agencies.

Don’t forget to follow up with sponsors and partners. You want to build on the relationship you established this year.

Build on your successes carefully. Move ahead with opportunities but don’t go too fast or take on too much all at once.



For more information, please contact our Events Nova Scotia staff
at Communities, Culture and Heritage at events.novascotia.ca/contact