

# EVENT STRATEGY FRAMEWORK



2020-2025

# CONTENTS

<b>Research &amp; Consultation</b>	<b>4</b>
Cape Breton Advantage	4
Facility Readiness	4
Partnerships	5
Cape Breton Event Brand	6
Strategy Outcomes	6
Current State Assessment	7
<b>STC Sport Tourism Roadmap</b>	<b>7</b>
<b>Event Classifications</b>	<b>8</b>
<b>The Customers</b>	<b>9</b>
<b>Stakeholders</b>	<b>9</b>
<b>Geographic Area of Focus</b>	<b>10</b>
<b>Event Lead Agency</b>	<b>11</b>
<b>Vision</b>	<b>12</b>
<b>Mission</b>	<b>12</b>
<b>Strategy Pillars</b>	<b>12</b>
<b>Action Plan</b>	<b>13</b>
<b>Event Outcomes</b>	<b>16</b>



## About GM Event Inc.

About GM Event Inc. GM Event Inc. is a consultancy for host cities, host venues, host organizations and rights holders specializing in the development of strategy and industry leading tools for major event attraction and hosting.

## COVID-19

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COVID-19, a viral respiratory illness, was identified in December 2019 and the first case in Canada was diagnosed on January 27, 2020. Based on the advice of public health experts, mass gatherings, including cultural, sport and entertainment events of all sizes have been cancelled in Canada and globally and movement of citizens has been significantly reduced with physical distancing guidelines which has impacted all but essential services. The result has been a complete shutdown of festivals and events and all other segments of tourism in Canada.

The work to develop the Cape Breton Event Strategy was completed just prior to the outbreak in COVID-19 in Canada. As a result, the timeframe for implementation has been adjusted from time-specific timelines to recommended timeframes working from the point where festivals and events can move from a recovery phase (modified hosting with limited in bound travel from outside the Atlantic Bubble or international visitors) to the resilience phase or the new normal for festival and event hosting.

As of September 2020, some events have begun to return behind closed doors or with limited spectator capacity which is a positive step toward recovery. However, there is no clear timeline nor a defined process for the return of festivals and events in Canada without widespread immunity or clear risk mitigation measures.

The return of festivals and events can be part of a recovery strategy for Cape Breton. As communities and public confidence have been deeply impacted as a result of COVID-19, there will be a need to rebuild a feeling of safety and willingness to engage back into community life. Festivals and events that attract people from the local communities out to “Island-wide” can be a key recovery strategy within the geographic areas of focus to support economic activity in Cape Breton. Once in-bound travel and mass gatherings can once again occur, festivals and events will once again contribute to the economic, social/cultural and sustainability recovery in communities of all sizes and in Cape Breton.



# RESEARCH & CONSULTATION

## Overview

As part of the discovery phase of the Cape Breton Event Strategy project, primary research was done with the stakeholder group through two facilitated sessions.

First, a session with the partners who are directly involved in the attraction and hosting of many events including: Destination Cape Breton, Events Cape Breton, Cape Breton Regional Municipality, Cape Breton University and Membertou Trade and Convention Centre. The Province of Nova Scotia, through Events Nova Scotia, a unit of the Department of Communities, Culture and Heritage was also a participant in this process.

A second session was held with stakeholders in the event sector that was comprised of the partner group plus accommodations providers, venues, municipal representatives and event organizers.

The finding of this process included:

### Cape Breton Advantage

#### Themes

- Destination and experiences
- People
- Cultural experiences including culinary
- “Capacity of a city...culture of a community”

#### Disadvantages

- Access (air and local transport links)
- Funding structure
- Seasonal – open for business year-round

### Facility Readiness

#### Assets

- Sport and cultural venues
- Indoor multi-use and outdoor venues
- Mix of accommodations and quality of resorts
- Golf courses and experiences

#### Gaps

- Back of house infrastructure
- Convention space with flexible breakout capacity
- Temporary venue supplies (i.e. tents)



## Partnerships

- Not all partners have the same knowledge or capacity
- Information flow needs to be improved and consistent
- Different mandates and priorities
- Limitations of corporate sector creates capacity challenges for private sector partnerships
- Resident engagement is strong but inconsistent
- Proactive process to inform residents and engage in events

Cape Breton can benefit from the support and resources of the Province of Nova Scotia. Events Nova Scotia, a program area within the Department of Communities, Cultures and Heritage, has developed tools and resources including transfer of knowledge from other events in the province. There is also a provincial volunteer database that was originally developed in 2011 as a legacy of the Canada Winter Games and is being enhanced for province-wide use. Events Nova Scotia also has led the development of a provincial event strategy and Cape Breton has the opportunity to leverage the support of the provincial government by aligning efforts and activities.





## Cape Breton Event Brand

- Aligned with destination brand – *Your Heart Will Never Leave*
- Cultural and experiential assets are strong enhancements to events
- Consistent evaluation and information flow from all events
- Resources and plan to activate around events
- Better understanding of event brand requires communication

## Strategy Outcomes

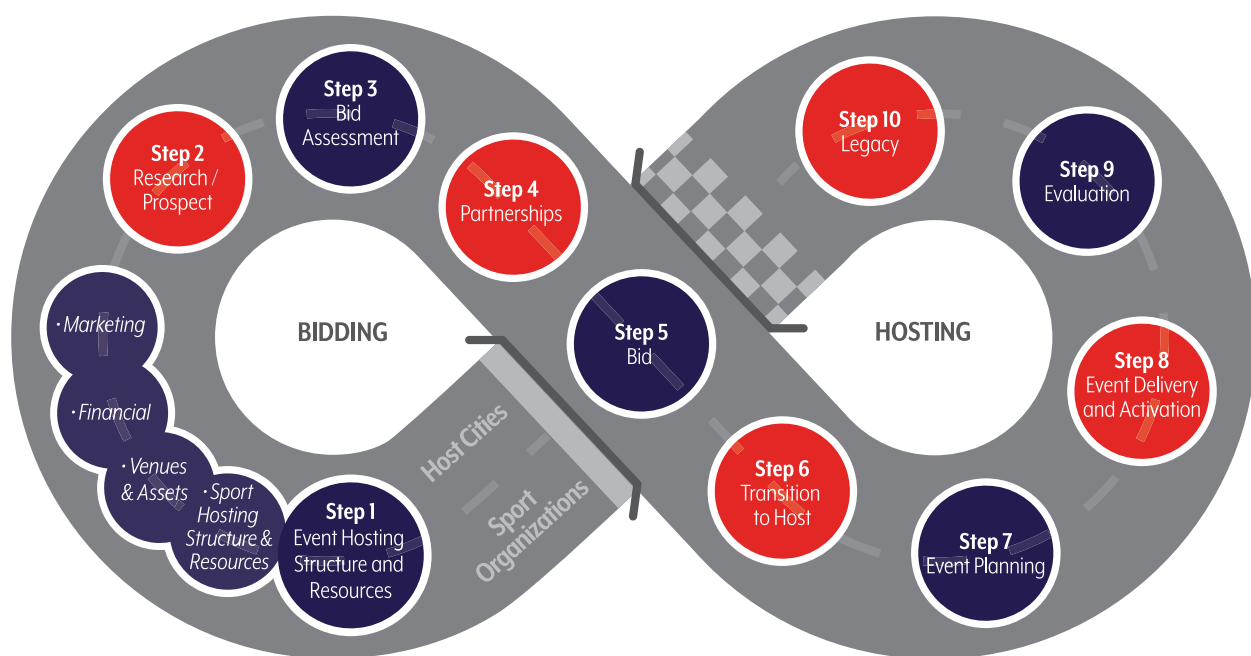
- Shared calendar and common understanding
- Leverage events for facility development
- Classification of events – not all events are part of event strategy
- Packaging opportunities (event and experience)
- Build value proposition for corporate sector and manage corporate burnout
- Manage capacity (volunteer, local organization, government and corporate)



## Current State Assessment

For this project, the Sport Tourism Canada Sport Tourism Assessment Template (STAT) was used to gather information about the current state of readiness for bidding/development of events and hosting. In order to ensure that the entire model is sustainable and repeatable to provide consistency and incremental growth, it is based on the following infinity cycle:

### SPORT TOURISM ROADMAP<sup>®</sup>



Printed with permission of Sport Tourism Canada.

For Cape Breton, it is recommended that this model be adapted to include sport, cultural and business events that meet specific classification requirements.

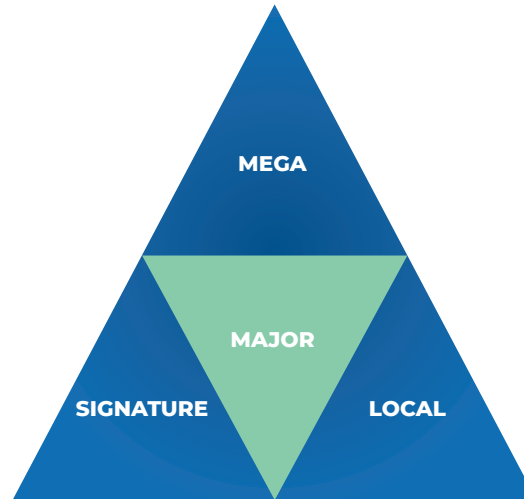
The outcome of the STAT process provided both scoring to establish a baseline against which Cape Breton could base future assessments and to track

progression. There were findings and recommendations for each of the ten steps of event bidding and hosting plus a recommended action plan that provided many of the actions outlined for the Cape Breton Event Strategy.

# EVENT CLASSIFICATIONS

For this strategy to be successful in implementation and sustainable for the next five years, a focus on specific events should be considered.

Events can be defined by several names and defining criteria. For discussion purposes, the following chart shows several types of events:



## Mega Events

These can be multi-discipline and require significant infrastructure requirements and financial commitment of all levels of government. Examples include Canada Games or cultural events such as a Juno Awards. Decision-making around these types of events usually occurs at the government level and is linked to other priorities.



## Major Events

This level of events require event and other infrastructure and generate in-bound visitation. They generate media coverage and can be economic and tourism generators and help to build the hosting brand for the region. These events typically have a formal bid process and have opportunity costs to attract and financial commitments associated. Examples include the Scotties Tournament of Hearts, Telus Cup (Hockey), Grand Slam of Curling, the East Coast Music Awards and some national business events. This area is suggested as the primary area of focus for this strategy and specifically for new or incremental event business.



## Signature Events

These events are existing and help to define the sport, cultural and business makeup of the region. They are generally led by local community-based organizations and contribute to the economic and social makeup of the region, while generating some in bound visitation on an annual basis. Some examples include the Celtic Colours International Music Festival and Cabot Trail Relay. In some cases, these events can be enhanced to rise to the level of Major events in terms of infrastructure, financial and event impacts and community pride and legacy.



## Local Events

These events can occur annually or be one-time including significant anniversary or milestone dates. They are always led by local members of the community and the audience or attendee is for the most part local. While these events may qualify for municipal funding, it is recommended that these not be the focus of this strategy.



## THE CUSTOMERS

Generally, the customers are at the centre of every decision related to future event development or attraction.

In the event sector, the **primary customer** is the event rights holder who can select Cape Breton as the chosen destination for the event property.

The **secondary customer** refers to the traveler who can decide to attend the event as a spectator, friend or family member and experience all that Cape Breton Island has to offer.

The **tertiary customer** is a resident of Cape Breton that can be engaged to support each event and serve as host ambassadors for the island and assist in curating some of the expectational experiences outside of the event venue.

## STAKEHOLDERS

- Accommodations and Resort Owners/Operators
- ACOA
- Cape Breton Regional Municipality
- Cape Breton Partnership
- Cape Breton University
- Allan J. MacEachen Port Hawkesbury Airport
- Celtic Colours International Festival
- Chambers of Commerce
- Destination Cape Breton Association
- Five First Nation Communities in Cape Breton
- Inverness County
- JA Douglas McCurdy Sydney Airport
- Membertou Trade & Convention Centre
- Nova Scotia Communities, Culture and Heritage – Events Nova Scotia
- Nova Scotia Community College
- Port of Sydney
- Port Hawkesbury Civic Centre and Town of Port Hawkesbury
- Richmond County
- Savoy Theatre
- Victoria County

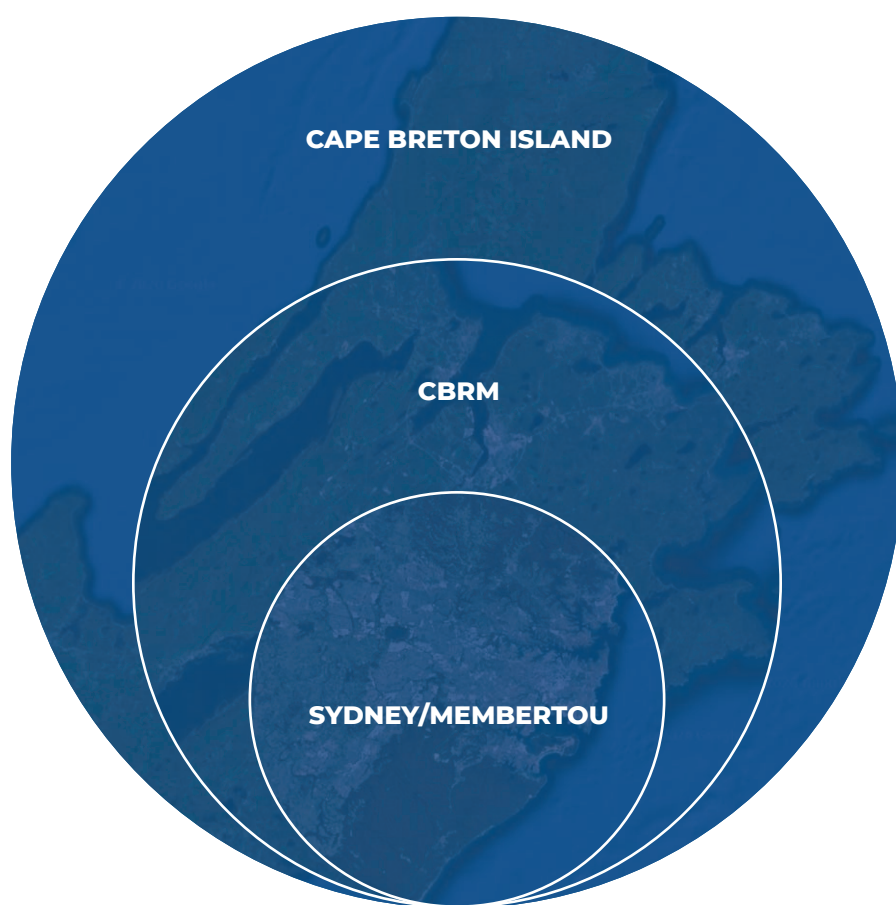
Cape Breton can also form strategic partnerships with Events Nova Scotia (Department of Communities, Culture and Heritage) and work with the Events Nova Scotia Advisory Committee, comprised of all regions of Nova Scotia, to identify event attraction targets either for Cape Breton, or as part of an event co-hosting model.



## GEOGRAPHIC AREA OF FOCUS

It is recommended that event attraction, hosting and evaluation be based on an “Island-Wide” approach. This will provide opportunities to align with the destination marketing of Destination Cape Breton Association while also enabling those interested municipalities to opt in based on their assets, interest and financial capacity to be active in the event sector.

Based on available event venues, accommodations and access opportunities, the following scope of mandate is recommended:



This approach will ensure the Island-Wide approach is inclusive and representative of all municipalities and venues that are able to actively attract and host events, while recognizing that the majority of facilities and venues are located within the CBRM and, more specifically, Sydney and Membertou.

# EVENT LEAD AGENCY

Cape Breton has had a lead agency, Events Cape Breton, for the past decade. This program has supported the attraction and hosting of sport, cultural and business events and has reached the program end based on funding.

The 2.0 version of Events Cape Breton should be structured and mandated to support the implementation of the event strategy, including event attraction, creation and innovation, while also providing the supports to municipalities, venues and stakeholders to deliver on a strategic approach

to events, as shown in the Canadian Sport Tourism Sport Tourism Roadmap. While this model is based on a sport tourism model, Cape Breton can adapt it to ensure it is inclusive of sport, cultural and business events.

Given the island-wide approach there will need to be a balance of direct event attraction, support to communities and venues who are doing their own event attraction, and coordination throughout the event cycle of bidding/development and hosting.







## VISION

Leveraging the people, places and cultures that capture the hearts of visitors to Cape Breton, every venue on the island will set the stage to attract visitors and deliver exceptional event experiences throughout the year, elevating Cape Breton to a top-ten hosting destination in Canada.



## STRATEGY PILLARS

- Leadership to drive alignment and collaboration
- Sustainable financial resources to win and grow event business and support event impacts
- Marketing and communication to tell the Cape Breton event story to residents and the world
- Infrastructure enhancements to support sport, culture and business events
- Purposeful legacy outcomes and accountability



## MISSION

Cape Breton will provide the leadership, resources and structure to attract, create and innovate events and ensure customers can choose the island while facilitating success that enhances event impacts and the quality of life for all residents.

# ACTION PLAN

Timelines associated with this strategy (Pre COVID-19)

- Short term – 2020-2021
- Long-term – 2022-2024

Adjusted timelines to reflect impacts of COVID-19

- Recovery Phase – Modified hosting with limited attendees and visitors
- Short-term – Recovery + 2 years
- Long-term – Recovery + 3-5 years

## Leadership to drive alignment and collaboration

KEY ACTION	RECOVERY PHASE	SHORT-TERM	LONG-TERM
Confirm lead organization for event attraction, creation, innovation and hosting support	•		
Develop and implement updated governance structure for event lead agency	•		
Establish local organizational capacity inventory	•		
Initiate festival and event stakeholder engagement sessions	•		
Socialize strategy with stakeholder groups	•		
Develop festival and event COVID-19 response and recovery plan	•		
Review and implement event strategy		•	
Develop collaboration approach and process		•	
Develop and implement service standards for event lead agency		•	
Develop event development/attraction strategy in alignment with the Nova Scotia Events Strategy and based on venue inventory, local organizational capacity, financial resources and local priorities			•
Develop formal ambassador program for consistent application across events			•
Develop bid roadmap for sport, cultural and other local organizations			•
Develop transition from bid to organizing coordination services			•
Establish advisory roles and responsibilities			•

### Sustainable financial resources to win event business and support event impacts

KEY ACTION	RECOVERY PHASE	SHORT-TERM	LONG-TERM
Assess financial impact to festival and event funding from COVID-19	•		
Establish interim budget during recovery phase to enable limited festival and events to support economic activity and build resident and customer confidence	•		
Establish sustainable budget for event lead agency (cash and value in kind)	•		
Develop sustainable fund to support event attraction, creation and innovation	•		
Determine, in consultation with event stakeholders, solutions to address the financial risks association with events		•	
Develop event funding solicitation approach and roadmap		•	
Conduct annual financial review of festivals and events to determine contribution from all sources			•
Prepare annual report of opportunities lost based on financial limitations			•

### Marketing and communication to tell the Cape Breton event story to residents and the world

KEY ACTION	RECOVERY PHASE	SHORT-TERM	LONG-TERM
Identify festival and event hosting successes during recovery phase	•		
Capture content of festivals and events held during recovery phase	•		
Publish event hosting history for visibility by customer groups	•		
Review/refresh event brand for use with customer groups	•		
Develop and publish Cape Breton events fact sheet (customer focused)	•		
Review and refresh event website	•		
Develop event brand guidelines for consistent application		•	
Develop photo library of existing event venues		•	
Develop Cape Breton event video		•	
Develop consistent marketing standards for all events			•
Develop Cape Breton event map (venues and accommodations)			•
Upgrade social media strategy			•
Upgrade event tourism presentation and printed material tool kit			•
Develop event pageantry graphic standard manual and tool kit			•
Update website based on other marketing enhancements			•
Upgrade bid book template			•
Upgrade bid tool kit including bid evaluation site visit and bid presentations to rights holder			•
Develop event activation plan and budget			•



### Infrastructure enhancements to support sport, culture and business events

KEY ACTION	RECOVERY PHASE	SHORT-TERM	LONG-TERM
Assess infrastructure and asset capacity to host events during recovery phase	•		
Accommodation, conference and social function room inventory	•		
Event field of play/performance/meeting and ancillary space inventory	•		
Venue assessment and gap analysis		•	
Venue inventory assessment recommendations and alignment with recreation facility master plan and other capital plans		•	
Develop capital scope of work for next international event			•

### Purposeful legacy outcomes and accountability

KEY ACTION	RECOVERY PHASE	SHORT-TERM	LONG-TERM
Develop economic activity/supply chain assessment for decision support	•		
Determine municipal and key venue plans for recovery phase and for resilience phase	•		
Develop/review event policy framework for consideration of municipal units and other agencies regarding event supports and parameters	•		
Implement economic impact forecast as a decision-support tool		•	
Develop event impact pro-forma using consistent methodology		•	
Develop event bid budget pro-forma using consistent methodology		•	
Develop event budget pro-forma using consistent methodology		•	
Develop consistent budget standards		•	
Submit annual report to STC for host city/region rankings		•	
Develop and implement risk assessment/management process			•
Establish volunteer program for Cape Breton			•
Conduct economic impact analysis for major events at a certain level			•
Finalize consistent bid/event evaluation tools and methodology			•
Establish centralized event filing system			•
Establish consistent event legacy program			•
Establish transfer of knowledge program			•
Establish event sustainability program			•

# EVENT OUTCOMES

To ensure clear and consistent performance measurement for major events, a “triple bottom line” approach can achieve the intended outcomes. The relevant “bottom lines” for major events include:

<b>ECONOMIC OUTCOMES</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Event Indicators (Bids, Wins, # Events, Off-Island and Out of Region Attendance)</li> <li>• Economic Impact (Gross Domestic Product, Jobs, Supply Chain)</li> <li>• Tourism (Room Nights, Length of Stay, Spending) Shoulder/Winter vs Peak Season</li> <li>• Brand (Media Value, Return on Investment)</li> </ul>
<b>SOCIAL/CULTURAL OUTCOMES</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Volunteer (Number, Hours)</li> <li>• Community Pride (Public Engagement, Event Awareness, Satisfaction Index)</li> <li>• Culture (Local Performers, Local Culinary, Under-Represented Groups)</li> </ul>
<b>SUSTAINABILITY OUTCOMES (MEETING THE NEEDS OF THE PRESENT WITH POSITIVE IMPACT ON THE FUTURE)</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Leadership (Governance, Management, Transfer of Knowledge)</li> <li>• Venues (Existing Venues, Temporary Venues)</li> <li>• Logistics (Accommodation, Transportation, Food Service)</li> <li>• Legacy (Financial, Sport, Culture)</li> <li>• Marketing (Attendance Building, Communication, Social Inclusion)</li> <li>• Environmental (Climate Change, Air, Water, Waste, Biodiversity)</li> </ul>







## EVENT STRATEGY FRAMEWORK

2020-2025