



Maximising Benefits from Events Toolkit for Event Organisers

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Introduction

East Gippsland Shire Council has developed a series of toolkits to help:

- local event organisers learn how to increase the economic benefits from their events for the community
- local businesses and community groups learn how to increase the benefits they gain from local events.

This guide outlines practical ways you can increase your event's economic benefits for your community by:

- Buying from local suppliers and creating direct opportunities for sole traders
- Using local community groups and facilitating skill development
- Securing funding from outside of the shire, such as sponsorship and grants
- Increasing attendance by out-of-region visitors who bring new money into the local economy
- Encouraging out-of-region attendees to spend more and stay longer.



Calendar of East Gippsland events

To find upcoming East Gippsland events, visit:

www.visiteastgippsland.com.au/whats-on/events

Benefits of events for communities

Hundreds of festivals, sporting events, business events, and markets are held across East Gippsland each year, providing numerous short- and long-term benefits to our community.

Social and cultural benefits

Events provide vibrancy, and cultural experiences for locals, which enhances liveability. They generate a feeling of community pride as they celebrate a community's history, heritage, special interests, music, and sport. Events activate sport, recreational, cultural and entertainment community assets, venues, and public spaces. Through volunteering, events enable residents to give back to their community, socialise, laugh, learn new skills, and showcase their talents.

Economic benefits

Events attract tens of thousands of visitors to East Gippsland each year. These visitors inject a significant amount of new money into our local economy as event attendees and external visitors spend money on fuel, food, accommodation, retail, entertainment and more.

Events are also agents of local employment that encourage skill development and support self-employed people (vendors and contractors).

Tourism and marketing benefits

Events are powerful drivers of tourism, which is particularly valuable for rural destinations and small towns. Research by Tourism Australia revealed that three-quarters of event attendees would not have gone to a destination if not for an event. For 57% of first-time visitors to a region and 69% of repeat visitors, an event is the main reason for visiting.

First time visitors who come for events get to discover our region, and many will return at other times, or tell others about their trip to East Gippsland. Such visits can lead to new residents and investment.

Events held outside of the peak tourism season help to increase visitation at a time when business is slow.

Event marketing also increases awareness of a destination, and the destination's reputation.



How to maximise economic and tourism benefits for your community

Events do a great job of dispersing their economic impact across many kinds of local businesses, including:

- Suppliers of event services such as entertainers, trophy suppliers, equipment hire, AV and staging companies, graphic designers and printers, caterers, tradespersons, cleaners, media, and risk, waste, and traffic management providers
- Accommodations, attractions, and transport providers
- Retailers such as supermarkets, cafes, chemists, petrol stations, bottle shops, and sports, clothing, and gift shops
- Sole traders such as food vendors and retail market stalls.

There are many things that event organisers can do to maximise economic benefits for their community. This is not just a feel-good activity; when events create a positive impact for their community, they are more likely to get greater community support, thus helping the event to grow and improve.

Boosting your event's impact on the local economy is a simple equation:

- Buy more locally
- Increase your income from outside the shire
- Attract out-of-region visitors to the shire

Increase your event's local expenditure

As an event organiser, the more you buy or hire from local suppliers, the greater your event's contribution to the local economy will be. Using local suppliers also reduces the carbon footprint of your event.

Hiring community groups and service clubs to provide services for the event such as parking management or food and beverage sales, also ensures the community benefits from your event's expenditure.

Increase your event's income from outside the region

Attracting new money into a local economy has a larger impact than encouraging existing money to circulate around it (i.e. locals spending their money locally).

Examples of income an event organiser can bring into the shire include:

- sponsorship revenue, grant funding, and donations from outside the shire.
- ticket sales to visitors to the region.
- other expenditure made by visitors who come to the shire for your event.

Increase your event's tourism impact

To increase the economic impact from tourism via your event there are four strategies to work on:

1



Attract more
out-of-region
visitors, who

2



spend more
money, and

3



stay longer,
and

4



encourage
visitors to
return in
the future.

This refers to all visitors to the shire who are not event employees (such as entertainers), therefore including attendees, competitors, participants, exhibitors, stallholders, and media.

You might prefer to focus on attracting high-value visitors (visitors who will spend more money per person per trip) than on attracting many visitors who will spend less per person, as larger crowds are more work for an event organiser to manage than smaller crowds.

Attracting visitors who spend more and stay longer

Attracting more and higher-value visitors and tempting them to stay longer is determined by your marketing tactics (See page 18) and your event's programming.

Here are some examples:

- A marketing tactic to tempt visitors to stay longer might be promoting a two-day itinerary comprised of things to do around your town that would appeal to your target market's interests.
- A programming tactic would be to run a two-day event which will be more likely to attract overnight visitors who would spend more money than day-trippers to a one-day event.
- Another programming tactic would be to attract the same number of attendees but to smaller events spread across a longer time. An example would be a month-long harvest festival with numerous foodie and agritourism events happening across the shire. This tactic spreads the benefits from the attendees across a longer time than a one-day or two-day event. An example of a positive outcome from this is having the capacity to accommodate them all locally.



Inspiring repeat visitation

Delivering a great event experience and creating a strong connection between the event and the destination with your marketing or program (such as by activating a special natural site with an event) creates attendee loyalty and advocacy, and this drives repeat visitation (i.e., attendees returning, and even returning with friends!)

Other ways to encourage repeat visitation include:

- Collaborating with other events to create a seasonal calendar of events, or a period of similar themed events such as a month of sports events.
- Using your event's marketing channels (such as social media and newsletter) to promote other local events that would be of interest to your attendees.
- Providing incentives for visitors to come back, such as exclusive offers for attendees. An example might be a 'stay two nights get the third night free' offer at several local accommodations for the off-peak season. Consider asking your local Business and Tourism Association if they could coordinate the development of such an offer.

Case Study: Increasing an event's tourism impact

Gippsland Lakes Paddle Challenge made changes to its event to increase the yield the region gets from the visitors that the event attracts into the region. In the past, the event used to start later in the morning to provide enough time for day trippers from Melbourne to drive up in the morning, and also to return home on the same day. The organisers changed the start time of the event to earlier in the morning to encourage competitors to come down the day before and stay overnight.

The inaugural Paddle Challenge in 2011 saw thirty-six entries on three different types of crafts.

In 2021 there were 202 entries on ten different crafts. With two courses, Paynesville to Lakes Entrance 27 kilometre (experience) and the Metung 13-kilometre course (novice) it is now the largest multi-craft paddle event in Victoria and equals many other events in Australia.

For adverse weather conditions the event can be reversed or held the following day.

The organisers are considering further encouraging a pre-event overnight stay by adding a pre-registration option during the late afternoon on the day before the challenge. Food vans would be invited to provide a reason to gather with other competitors to share a picnic dinner outdoors.

Additionally, the organisers would like to invite manufacturers of watercraft such as surf skis, sea kayaks and SUPs to host a 'try out' afternoon, enabling competitors to test paddle new crafts and paddling accessories.

The organizers ask accommodation sponsors to provide vouchers for their raffle to be used in the future to encourage return visitation. Such a voucher usually is for one or two nights, valid in the off season.



All event finishers go into the lucky draw at the presentation after the event to win a variety of donated prizes from both local and out of the area businesses.

The organisers also ask accommodation sponsors to provide one night for free when booking two or more nights on the event weekend. This is advertised on the event website with a list of all accommodation sponsors.

The event's visitor survey reveals that competitors tend to return to the destination later in the year and recommend the destination to others. The event organisers would like to help visitors learn about reasons to stay longer and explore the region by promoting the destination on their website, and in their registration email.



How to increase your event's local expenditure

How to engage local businesses and community groups with your event so they can benefit from the attendees that your event will attract:

- Consider holding your event in the off-season or a shoulder season rather than in peak season when businesses do not have capacity to engage and benefit from your event, and accommodations are already full.
- Have a 'buy local policy' whereby you will always buy from local suppliers first if they can offer the required products or services at the required standard and a competitive price (e.g., up to 10% higher than an out-of-region supplier).
- Determine the needs of your event and of its attendees – what services and products will your event need to buy, and what services and products will your attendees need or want?
- Provide information to local businesses and community groups about the event and opportunities for them to profit or fundraise from attendees or gain other benefits, such as connecting with a new target market or raising awareness of their charitable cause. You might want to identify which businesses and groups could service your needs, and specifically invite them to get involved. Consider hosting an information session for local businesses and community groups.
- Be sure to provide plenty of lead time for businesses and community groups – three to six months for medium-sized events and longer for larger events. Businesses need time to plan to expand their capacity to cater for crowds such as to hire an extra coffee machine and roster staff for the period of the event.
- Wherever possible, work with local businesses rather than competing against them. For example, do not duplicate what is on offer locally such as by bringing in coffee vans or food trucks with a similar menu to what is available locally.

Increase visitor expenditure with local businesses

Ask your local Business and Tourism Association to work with local businesses to consider how attendees could be enticed into the trading precinct. Examples include encouraging local traders to:

- decorate with banners, flags, decorations and displays around the event theme.
- provide exclusive offers or incentives for attendees to spend locally, such as a two-for-one deal, a discount, or a unique offer for purchases over a certain amount.

An event sub-committee formed of local traders can generate ideas on how to encourage visitors to spend more locally. Consider asking local traders to provide a representative to sit on your committee. Another way to effectively engage businesses with your event is to have a business liaison coordinator on the committee who undertakes this role.

Provide opportunities for community groups

Reaching out to community groups can be a great way to gain extra help for your event as well as increasing the benefits an event can provide the community.

What can community groups offer?

Service and community groups can play a variety of roles in planning and delivering events. While some roles require specialised skills or knowledge, such as traffic control and serving alcohol (noted with an asterisk in the list below), some groups are willing to obtain training if benefits for the community or their group can be achieved.

While each event has unique needs, below are some of the roles that community groups could fill that could be helpful to event organisers.

Some roles require a qualification, specific skills, or reference (e.g., police) checks (e.g., Working with Children). These are noted with an asterisk.

Pre-event

- Administrative roles – e.g., data entry, finance management
- Set up and construction
- Assistance promoting the event

During the event

- Construction and putting up fences and marquees
- Traffic management*
- Car parking management
- Entry gate management
- Ticket sales
- Money handling
- Crowd and event marshals
- Shuttle bus services
- Food and beverage sales
- Food handling
- Responsible serving of alcohol*
- Stage management
- Registering participants
- Entertainment
- Children's activities*
- Supervising areas
- MC
- Information booths
- Market research of attendees
- Waste management and educating attendees on recyclables
- Laundry services (or collection and delivery)

Post-event

- Evaluation/data analysis
- Dismantling the site
- Clean up

How to involve community groups

In your event planning consider:

- The opportunities for local groups to fundraise at your event, such as by selling raffle tickets or food, offering services which will add value to your event, or doing some of the event's planning or delivery tasks.
- The specific tasks or roles that need to be filled and the skills required for those.
- Which roles can be fulfilled by volunteers, and which need to be paid positions.

Put together a request for expressions of interest outlining:

- The event's details
- Specific roles required
- Skills required
- Number of people required
- Dates and times required
- Training dates and times
- Rights, responsibilities, and rules for the event
- Donation amount available for each role

Approach community groups directly to seek their interest. Both the event organiser and the group should be clear about expectations and requirements. Once groups have agreed to help, or if they ask for more information, provide additional details, such as:

- Role descriptions: duties and responsibilities
- Experience, qualifications, skills, and personal attributes required
- Specific requirements such as heavy lifting or PPE (personal protective equipment)
- Performance standards required
- Rewards, incentives, and recognition provided
- Volunteer needs such as identification, clothing, food, drinks, breaks, shade, etc
- Decision making authority and reporting requirements
- Event policies and procedures
- Insurance coverage
- Training procedures and inductions
- Timelines and processes used for event planning
- Feedback and evaluation mechanisms (during and after event)

Case Study: Collaborating with Community Groups

Each year, early in its planning cycle, Deni Ute Muster in Deniliquin, southern NSW, sends out a call to its database of local community groups for expressions of interest (EOI) in managing an aspect of the event, such as car parking, camping, clean up, traffic, and toilets.

The community groups respond with their interest in managing a certain element, and once their EOI is accepted by the event director, they are responsible for gathering their team and the required resources to manage this aspect of the event. In return they are paid a donation for the hours they contribute.

Many local community groups only need to do this one fundraising activity each year to raise all the funds they need – making it a much more efficient way to raise funds than having volunteers selling raffle tickets every Sunday of the year!



Make sure the experience is a positive one for all your volunteers, and reward, acknowledge and thank volunteers and groups for their efforts – they may become your event's best ambassadors.



How to increase your event's income from outside the region

Grants

Securing state, federal, and philanthropic grants brings new money into your community.

Grant opportunities change frequently, but each year there are usually several opportunities to secure a grant for an element of an event such as entertainment or marketing.

Remember to look beyond just 'event' grants. Other kinds of grants might suit your needs, such as grants for

- the arts (e.g., for entertainment)
- heritage (e.g., for workshops and events held as part of your program in a museum)
- Indigenous culture or people (e.g., for events held as part of your program that connect attendees with local Aboriginal culture)
- sports (e.g., for sporting events)
- digital training grants (e.g., for learning digital marketing).

Find grant opportunities at:

- East Gippsland Grant Finder (www.eastgippsland.grantguru.com.au)
- Grant Connect (www.grants.gov.au)
- Community Grants (www.communitygrants.gov.au)
- Funding Centre (www.fundingcentre.com.au/grant/search)
- Foundation for Rural Regional Renewal (www.frrr.org.au/funding)
- Victorian State Government's grants portal (www.vic.gov.au/grants)
- Regional Development Australia Gippsland (www.rdv.vic.gov.au/grants-and-programs)

East Gippsland Shire Council also offers grants. Grants from Council help event organisers, but do not have the same economic impact for the community as grants sourced from outside the shire. Learn more about Council's grants at www.eastgippsland.vic.gov.au/community/grants.

Sponsorship

Local businesses make great event sponsors, but they are often called on to support a lot of events. When securing sponsorship from businesses outside of your region, you bring new money into the local economy so this should be your primary aim when planning your approach to sponsorship.

Think of what kinds of corporations are trying to reach the type of attendees you will attract. For example, if you will attract families, can you secure sponsorship from a baby food manufacturer, or a national toy retail store, or a kids snack food company (a healthy one)?

Competition for sponsorship is fierce, so approaches to potential sponsors must be carefully and strategically planned. Start early; several months' lead time is often required.

Before approaching any potential sponsors, work out exactly what you would like to have, both cash, and in-kind provision of products or services that would help reduce an event's expenses.

Put a sponsorship value on specific aspects of the event. There is no perfect formula to work out the value of a sponsorship, however, you may like to start by considering what it costs to produce the part of the event you are seeking sponsorship for, the benefits you can provide to a sponsor, and what the cost of providing those benefits would be (for example, the costs of signage and hospitality).

In-kind sponsorship

In-kind sponsorship can be extremely useful to an event. It may include expertise, services, products, infrastructure, equipment, and personnel. Look at the areas within the budget that will cost money and see whether any of these can be provided via in-kind sponsorship.

In-kind sponsorship should be sought to off-set actual costs in the event budget. If it will not off-set an actual cost, consider how much time, money and effort is required to manage the sponsorship, and whether it is worth the effort.

Look after in-kind sponsors just as you would cash sponsors.

How to approach potential sponsors

Attracting and retaining sponsorships requires excellent negotiation skills. Consider this when deciding who will be approaching sponsors.

When approaching potential sponsors, keep in mind most businesses:

- will not know much, if anything, about your event. You will need to tell them about the event, its target markets, and what benefits the event will bring to the community.
- consider sponsorship to be a marketing activity (some will sponsor an event to be good corporate citizens, however, most want some type of return on their investment).
- make decisions based on a combination of personal contact, and written information that demonstrates your event is credible and can deliver on what is promised.

Improve your chances of success by:

- Considering who else is trying to reach the same target market as the event. If you can bring a large number of a business' target markets together in one place, you have something to offer to that business.
- Researching potential sponsors before approaching them to help you assess whether the partnership may be a good fit. Some businesses will only consider sponsorship proposals at specific times of the year. As part of your research determine what these timeframes are.
- Calling the potential sponsor prior to submitting anything in writing to briefly explain your event.
- Being ready to tailor deliverables to achieve the outcomes that the potential sponsor wants. (This will vary depending on what they are trying to achieve). If possible, present the proposal in person. This will allow the sponsor and you to identify other opportunities. Make sure it is exciting, enjoyable, and fun for the sponsor – not hard work.

What is in it for the sponsor?

Most importantly, consider what would be in it for the sponsor. What would they get out of the sponsorship? Often, sponsors want to:

- make sales
- increase awareness of their business and build their profile within the community and with a certain target market
- test or launch a new product or service
- network with their target market at your event
- be seen as being a good corporate citizen giving back to the community, i.e., receive positive publicity from supporting your event.

What can your event offer a sponsor?

Identify any potential publicity opportunities where you must acknowledge sponsors. Below are some ideas - the value of sponsorships should be assessed according to the benefits offered.

- Naming rights to the event or specific parts of the event (e.g., proudly presented by..., official beverage, sponsor of the volunteer team, main stage sponsor, etc), ensuring their business name is often mentioned and seen.
- Exposure in your marketing activities, particularly in ways that are highly engaging, such as stories rather than factual accounts. Some sponsors would like access to your database, but this must be done within privacy laws – you must have a person's permission to pass on their information to a third party. If the event recommends a business in an authentic way to its database this will have more impact with attendees than letting the business market directly to the database.
- Involvement at the event, such as by selling or giving away products, involvement in or hosting of functions, tickets to the event, VIP passes, opportunity to meet attendees, access to celebrities.
- The opportunity to provide offers to attendees (during the event or in the marketing phase) such as discounts.
- Brand exposure via on-site signage (various locations may be worth different amounts depending on exposure), on clothing, website, vehicles, banners, etc.
- Including a question in your attendee survey that is of use to the sponsor.

Sponsorship proposals include:

- A brief overview of your event: its purpose, goals, who is conducting the event, date, time, venue.
- Clearly defined target markets: the type of people who will attend, where they live, their age ranges, their interests, etc, and expected attendance numbers.
- The benefits your event will bring to the local community.
- The opportunities (and costs) to be involved as a sponsor and what the event can provide in return (the benefits).
- Your contact details.
- Key timelines.

Case Study: Maximising benefits for sponsors

Twin Rivers Bream Classic aims to maximise value for the event's sponsors. The competition's major prize is a fishing boat which has the names of the two major sponsors written on it. In the lead up to the event the boat is parked in front of outdoor and fishing businesses and lakes across the region to raise awareness of the fishing competition while also raising awareness of its sponsors.

On the last day of the competition when prizes are awarded to winners (many of which are provided by sponsors), sponsors are invited to demonstrate their wares, teach skills, provide specials such as discounts to entrants, and run entertaining kids' activities. The opportunity to have a stall ensures sponsors have exposure and they can have face-to-face connections and conversations with potential customers.

The event organisers also ensure sponsors' brands are featured wherever possible in the event's marketing: in email communications, on flyers, on social media, on signage at the event, and during the awarding of prizes.



When a sponsor comes on board

- Be clear as to what the sponsorship agreement includes: put it in writing. Include what you will do before, during and after the event. Document the level of recognition and involvement they will have, and how you will measure outcomes.
- Consider creating promotions that will drive attendees to your sponsor's business, such as if a person spends in a sponsoring business, they receive an entry into a prize to be drawn after the event. This provides a way of measuring spend during the event, as well as encouraging attendees to spend with your sponsors.
- Give sponsors something extra; a surprise that will delight them and inspire them to support your next event.
- Make sure that you get tickets, or other benefits to them early, along with details for parking, times, etc.
- Invite your sponsors to launches, functions, networking opportunities, and of course the event itself.
- Allocate someone to give sponsors the VIP treatment at your event. Where necessary, provide parking and meet-and-greet arrangements for sponsors.
- Take photos of your sponsors to use in post-event reports and in other ways to recognise your sponsors.
- Consider how you can bring your sponsors together if networking is of value to them.
- Invite potential sponsors to your event and look after them to help secure their support for the next event.
- Produce a report at the end of the event. Before the event, ask your sponsors what they want to know to ensure you collect relevant information. Most will be satisfied with a report that includes details of what the sponsor received and who attended your event (See post event report on page 27).
- Review the sponsorship with the sponsor to discuss how things could be improved if they sponsored again.
- Make sure you thank and acknowledge your sponsors and stay connected with them throughout the year.



How to increase your event's tourism impact

Deliver an exceptional experience

Delivering an exceptional event experience means getting the basics right, such as transport, accessibility, visitor services, cleanliness, food, facilities, Wi-Fi, signage and amenities. Good customer service is not just the domain of retail shops. Events can benefit by ensuring they offer high-quality customer service, particularly in inspiring return visitation and positive word-of-mouth recommendations.

Secondly, provide experiential elements such as great entertainment, innovative experiences, good food, and technological enhancements. A great experience provides visitors with an emotional connection to your destination. Provide opportunities for visitors to feel connected to family, friends and locals, to feel entertained, excited, inspired, or special, and to experience an escape from the everyday.



Look at your event through the eyes of your event visitors. Be critical and improve what you do not like. Do a “walk through” of your event covering when attendees are:

- trying to find information about your event and buy tickets online.
- arriving by car, foot or bicycle, and parking.
- entering and being welcomed.
- finding their way around the event.
- experiencing a day at the event.
- talking to people at the event.
- making purchases at the event.
- who they are likely to talk to.

Consider if the event is offering good quality customer service at every point. At first, you make people aware of your event, and they dream of attending. Then they firm up their commitment and plan to come, booking accommodation and planning their trip. Then they arrive in East Gippsland and experience your event live. At each stage they share with their social networks their plans and experiences. Each stage is part of the experience they have around your event, and at each stage they have specific needs, including different information requirements.

- Do you provide helpful directions and attractive, well-positioned signage?
- Is the parking adequate and well organised?
- Do you make a great first impression?
- Do you provide a welcome that makes visitors feel great about your event?
- Is the layout of the event easy to navigate and safe?
- Is the event offering excellent value and does it serve the needs of attendees?
- Are there parts of the event that you can change to enhance the enjoyment of visitors?
- Does the event have sufficient staff and volunteers? Are they rostered at the right times? Are they well trained and supported to be great ambassadors for the event and the region? Can they answer queries from event visitors and be helpful? Are they focused on providing top quality customer service?

Continuous improvement

Another way to ensure you are delivering a great event and improving it each year by keeping it fresh, on trend and appealing to your attendees (particularly those who attend regularly), is to undertake a post-event review after each event. This involves:

- Gathering feedback on the event via visitor and stakeholder surveys.
- Gathering information from other aspects of the event such as budget, ticket sales, marketing outcomes, website and social media analytics, and a committee debrief meeting.
- Identifying what worked well and what could be improved.
- Researching event trends and best practice for your kind of event.
- Preparing a simple post-event report with recommendations for the next event for each aspect of event planning and delivery.

Connect your event with the destination

Examples of ways you can connect your event closely with its host destination include:

- Using distinctive elements from your region in your event, such as local produce, or special natural venues.
- Through your marketing and website, tell attendees what else they can do while they are in the region, such as providing two- and three-day itineraries that would be of interest to the event's target market. An example itinerary to encourage food event visitors to stay longer (and spend more money) in the shire might be a two-day suggested itinerary of foodie experiences across East Gippsland, including recommended cafes and restaurants for meals, a farmers' market, a farm tour, and a cooking class. Understand your visitors and, therefore, what will value-add to their experience.
- Providing a package plan with local attractions and retailers to increase visitor expenditure. An example might be a festival package that includes tickets to your event, a two-night stay in accommodation, and entry into an attraction that would appeal to the event's target market.
- Align your event's brand (logo and brand identity) with the destination's brand. East Gippsland Marketing may be able to assist with this (see contacts at the end of this toolkit).
- Work with partners to build up both the event's brand and the destination's brand.



Attract out-of-region visitors with effective marketing

Effective marketing is essential. Marketing is how you can:

- Attract visitors to the shire.
- Provide visitors with reasons to plan a longer visit to your town by letting them know about other experiences they can have while in the region.
- Secure and retain sponsors.

Planning and undertaking marketing activities requires consistency over quite a long-time frame. If you can afford it, hire a marketing agency, digital advertising agency, or PR agency to help with all or some of the marketing. The outcomes professionals can achieve is well worth the investment. If your budget does not permit this, consider undertaking training if you are your event's marketing coordinator.

Marketing training

Destination Gippsland has on-demand webinars on topics such as:

- Facebook ads
- Increasing your visibility on Facebook and Instagram
- PR tips
- Writing an Australian Tourism Data Warehouse (ATDW) listing (learn about on this on page 20)

Find these webinars at www.visitgippsland.com.au/destination-gippsland/industry-development/industry-training-events

Visit Victoria has a range of guides on topics such as:

- Marketing excellence
- Understanding visitor needs
- Writing an ATDW listing

Find these guides at www.corporate.visitvictoria.com/resources/industry-development and www.corporate.visitvictoria.com/resources/marketing-opportunities/about-atdw/how-to-create-an-atdw-event-listing

Engage with East Gippsland's marketing organisation

East Gippsland Marketing Inc (EGMI) promotes the region to attract visitors (Learn more about the organisation on page 28). If you think your event can attract visitors into the region, call them early in your event planning and ask for a meeting – even if you only have a vague idea of a new event you would like to run.

You can get one-on-one help with your marketing budget and tactics, including PR and social media tactics, introductions to others who can help you, and learn about opportunities to extend your marketing budget through cooperative marketing opportunities. East Gippsland Marketing are always looking for new stories to tell about the region – and events have great stories.

Contact East Gippsland Marketing Inc at info@egmi.com.au.

Marketing budget

East Gippsland sits quite a long way from where most of its visitors live, which means it can be difficult to attract visitors. So, the bigger your marketing budget and the more targeted your tactics, the better.

You can increase your marketing budget via:

- Grants and funding opportunities.
- Collaborative campaigns, such as with other events (such as all the events that will be held in East Gippsland in a season).
- Leveraging the networks of your event's stakeholders.

East Gippsland Marketing can help you determine a suitable budget for promoting your event.

Marketing plan

As a first step, plan out all the marketing you will do for your event, so you know what to do and when in order to achieve desired outcomes.

Set objectives

In your marketing plan it is best to start with your marketing objectives – what are you trying to achieve with your marketing budget? Refer to the objectives or KPIs you set for your event (See page 26). For example, you might be trying to sell a certain number of tickets, attract a certain number of out-of-region visitors or a certain number of overnight visitors, or achieve a certain average visitor expenditure or average length of stay.

Additional marketing objectives might be things such as:

- Increasing subscribers to your newsletter.
- Increasing followers or engagement on social media.
- Increasing visitors to your website.
- A certain reach (the number of people who see information about your event).
- A certain amount of media attention and stories published about the event.

Be specific when you set your event's KPIs. Smart goals are specific, measurable, achievable, realistic and timebound (it is set when they will be achieved by). You will also need to identify how you will evaluate or measure how well you did at achieving these KPIs after your event (Learn how to do this on page 25).

When you decide what your marketing tactics will be, you will be choosing them based on helping you achieve these outcomes.

Marketing Plan templates are available at: www.eastgippsland.vic.gov.au/leisure/events



Identify your key target markets

- Identify as precisely as possible who you want to attend your event - your target markets.
- Describe where they live, their income, age, lifestyle, interests, life stage (e.g., parents of school-aged children, empty nesters), their connection to East Gippsland if any (such as having friends or family living here, or they holiday here regularly), and so on. Remember that the NSW Far South Coast and Canberra might be a reliable source of visitors. The better you know your target markets, the more you can figure out how to reach them.
- You may wish to break your target markets into different segments, such as the main or primary target market and secondary markets.
- Decide on the key messages you will communicate to your target markets about your event. Communicate the benefits of attending your event - why someone would want to attend. An example of a benefit is not that there are kids' activities at the event, but that the event is a great excuse for a short break to get away and reconnect as a family with lots of activities. Another example is not that there will be five hours of championship motorsports races, but a super-exciting weekend full of action-packed motorsports and good times.

Marketing tactics

Determine how you will reach your target markets (see page 19 for more on marketing channels), and when.

Advertise your event early to give your attendees time to make their plans and to allow local businesses to prepare for the event and plan how they can leverage from it.

Consider promoting the event in phases, with certain key messages, such as:

- Awareness about the event, when it is on and where; "sign up to the newsletter to stay informed."
- Program announcement: Headline attractions and things to do for different target markets such as children's activities for families, or activities for heritage lovers; "sign up to the newsletter to stay informed."
- Tickets go on sale, prompt attendees to book their accommodation and encourage locals to invite their friends and relatives to visit East Gippsland during the event; "sign up to the newsletter to stay informed."
- Include stories about the participants.
- When the event is only one week away: Send another reminder with suggestions for what to bring to the event, weather forecast, etc.

When you promote your event, you should always include a call to action that asks the reader to do something, such as "to learn more, read the rest of the article" (on the website), "buy tickets here," "tag a friend," and so on. Always ensure that the basics such as dates, venues, and website are included, and consider including your local tourism website to help visitors find information on accommodation or the destination.



Brand

It is important that your event has a brand so that all your event promotion is consistent and tells the same overall story about your event. Using a consistent brand across all your marketing material will increase the recognition of your event when seen across multiple media and locations.

Your brand is more than a logo; it is the personality of your event, or the promise you make that your event will deliver (e.g., it will be thrilling, or family-friendly, or people will have great food experiences).

A graphic designer should be able to both create a logo and colour scheme for your event, as well as a 'brand story' that describes your event.

Content marketing

Content marketing refers to developing high quality content such as written stories, photos, and videos, and then sharing these via your marketing channels.

One piece of content, such as an article on The Top 10 Reasons Kids Love [Your Event], can start out its life as a media release and once published by media, be reused as a blog article. This article can be shared via your social media accounts and newsletter, and then break down into smaller pieces, such as 10 individual social media posts on each reason. This is a great way to do work once and get a lot of mileage out of it!

If you do not have high-quality photos or videos, make it a priority to hire a professional to capture these at your next event. Be sure to provide the photo/videographer with guidance, such as who your target markets are and that you would like images of attendees who represent those markets enjoying and participating in your event.

Marketing channels

This refers to all the channels of communication you must tell your target market about your event. People get information from a variety of sources, so successful marketing strategies involve an integrated combination of activities, providing repeat exposure of your event to potential attendees.

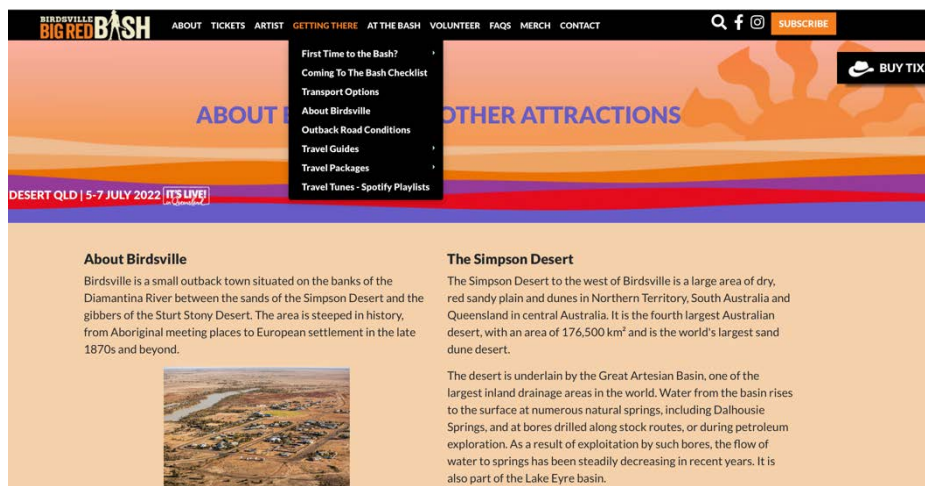
Below are some common ones. Some are owned by you, such as your website and your email database. Some are free, such as your organic (unpaid) social media and newsletter, and some are paid, such as digital and traditional advertising.

Website

This is the hub of all your marketing. Everything you send out should lead people back to your website for more information, and to buy tickets.

Support local by contracting a local website developer to build a website for your event. Ideally, find one that uses a simple program so that you can learn how to make basic changes to the site, such as uploading blog articles, and changing text and images on pages. The website must reflect the event's brand and be very user-friendly. It should include clear calls to action, such as to buy tickets or to sign up to the newsletter. You might want to integrate ticketing into your site or use a third-party ticketing website such as Eventbrite.

To inspire visitors to stay longer (and spend more money) in your town, it's important to include tourism and accommodation information that is relevant to your target market. Make it as easy as possible for people to book accommodation and find out in advance what else the area has to offer to extend their visit. For example, if your event's target market is older heritage lovers, have a page on your site that describes all the nearby heritage attractions, B&Bs and cafes in heritage buildings, cemetery tours, Indigenous cultural experiences, and so on. Link this page to your town's tourism website, www.visiteastgippsland.com.au and www.visitgippsland.com.au.



The Big Red Bash's website provides lots of tourism information to help attendees get the most out of their trip to the Outback. The Guzzler Ultra trail run event has a great page for visitors to its destination of Brisbane:

www.theguzzlerultra.com.au/destination-brisbane

Social media

For most target markets Facebook and Instagram are sufficient. Develop a Facebook event for your event, and make sure your accounts are branded with graphics designed by your graphic designer (e.g. your cover and profile images on Facebook).

Learn how to manage social media for your event effectively with Destination Gippsland's training webinars, which can be found at: www.visitgippsland.com.au/destination-gippsland/industry-development/industry-training-events.

Newsletter

If you hold your event regularly, such as annually, it is worth developing a database of contacts and sending out regular emails (such as monthly for the six months prior to your event, and weekly in the last month).

Set up your database, and an on-brand template in a group mail program such as Mailchimp. Start your database by adding in all your stakeholders such as suppliers, community groups, business associations, participants (such as stallholders, entertainers, and registered athlete competitors), local media and media in the places your target markets live, marketing organisations, sponsors, and so on. Tag or organise the several types of stakeholders so you can send targeted information to them if needed (see Marketing Partners on page 24 for an example).

In the lead up to your event, consider running a competition with an appealing prize to grow your database of potential attendees.

Your existing attendees are one of your most valuable assets. Consider what you can do to keep them coming back year after year and how they can encourage others to attend. For example, you could provide a discount for registering early exclusively for subscribers of your newsletter.

Listings on third-party websites

The free ATDW listing (Australian Tourism Data Warehouse) is your most important website listing. Once you have set up this listing, your event will be promoted on the Visit East Gippsland, Visit Gippsland, and Visit Victoria websites. Learn how to set up an ATDW listing at www.corporate.visitvictoria.com/resources/marketing-opportunities/about-atdw/how-to-create-an-atdw-event-listing

Digital advertising

Digital advertising includes social media ads, search engine ads, and display ads on third-party websites. Digital advertising can be much more targeted to specific audiences, so it is more cost effective than advertising in broadcast media, such as TV, radio, and newspapers.

This is a good area to spend money on professional help to ensure you get the best outcomes for your ad spend. However, anyone can learn to write social media and Google ads – simply take the time to learn and keep learning as you give it a shot. Destination Gippsland has a webinar on how to do Facebook advertising: www.visitgippsland.com.au/destination-gippsland/industry-development/industry-training-events

Printed collateral

In this category are various kinds of signage and printed material such as flyers and posters. These are quite expensive to print and distribute (and pick up after your event in the case of roadside corflutes). Before choosing this marketing channel, think carefully about effective ways to distribute each, such as by providing flyers to local visitor information centres, or asking local businesses to add a poster to their front window.

Broadcast media

This includes radio, TV, and newspapers, and magazines which require a long lead time. These are quite expensive to use for paid advertising, but a fantastic source of free marketing, if done well. These media are looking for newsworthy, engaging, interesting, and exclusive stories and interviews, and that is how you can get free coverage from them. The key to using media successfully is to concentrate on the media that your target market is most likely to be reading, seeing, or listening to.

At the very least, if you want to buy advertising through these media, negotiate for in-kind sponsorship as well. For example, in exchange for buying a large ad in the newspaper, negotiate for the paper to print your program on the weekend of your event, or publish two media releases in the lead up to your event. Always double check the proof of an ad.

Identify suitable local media and media in your source markets and add them to your email database. Contact them to find out about their audiences, the reach of their coverage, and their advertising costs and timelines.

Public relations (PR) activities

What can you do to get media attention? To promote the Polocrosse World Cup in its source markets (residences of its target markets), the Australian team rode their horses and carried Australian flags through the Queen Street Mall, played a short exhibition match during half time of the rugby in Brisbane and played a short exhibition match during the Magic Millions horse sale on the Gold Coast. In each case, they caught the attention of both the media and their target markets (people in Brisbane who like short breaks in the country, people who like rough sports, and people who love purebred horses).

What could you do to get media attention that is on-brand for your event? Could you even do something as simple as host a launch party for your event when the program is announced to get both media attention, and the attention of locals and local businesses?



Case Study: Peter Allen Festival

Tenterfield in north-eastern NSW, put on a celebration of its homegrown legend, 1970s Australian pop star Peter Allen (of I Still Call Australia Home fame).

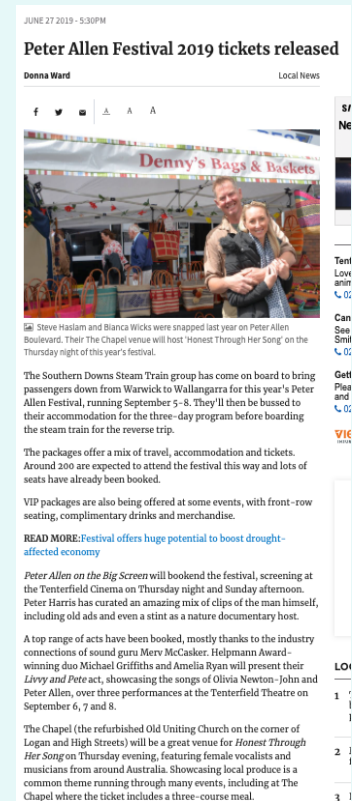
To launch the festival and its ticket sales, the organisers held a launch party for the community and media.

The launch included an introduction to the program and its headline acts, an update on how many tickets are expected to sell, how local accommodation is already filling up and plans for the growth of festival into a hero destination event.

The evening event began with a media photo opportunity of committee in front of the Tenterfield Saddler where Peter Allen had spent childhood visits with his grandfather. A costumed pianist playing Peter's iconic songs to give a taste of festival while a video slideshow played in the background.

As a community information session, the organisers handed out the printed program, let the community know what help they hoped to receive from volunteers, asked the community to invite family and friends from elsewhere to visit that weekend, let everyone know about the closure of the main street, spruiked sponsors, let local businesses know about sponsorship opportunities, and introduced the festival's marketing plans. They spoke of the need for everyone to help spread the word about the festival, and where they could access its marketing kit (see page 35 for more information on marketing kits).

The evening ended with a Q&A session followed by live music, nibbles, and networking.



Media releases

Consider the phases of your marketing to plan your media releases. Send out an announcement to ensure media get your event in their diaries around six to eight weeks in advance. Then follow up with newsworthy media releases in line with your phases.

If you want to be published in long-lead media such as magazines (which take a longer time to plan, publish and distribute), you will need to submit articles months in advance.

Make sure all your media stories are newsworthy and interesting – use your creativity and to produce angles that will attract the attention of the media. Different stories might be suitable for different media.

Provide high-quality and high-resolution images with your media release. High-resolution images should be sent via a link to a folder or via a link to a website where they are stored. More than one high-resolution image attached to an email mailout will result in lots of email servers rejecting the email because it is over 10MB. Images should also be chosen to suit various media formats (i.e. sized for Facebook, Instagram, newsletters, magazine covers etc).

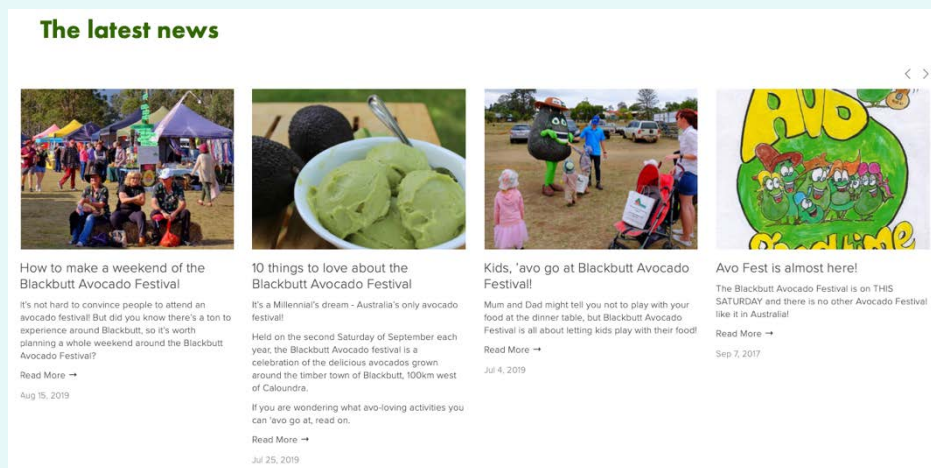
Case Study:

Blackbutt Avocado Festival

In southern Queensland the small town of Blackbutt celebrates its avocado farmers with a Millennial's dream festival.

The organisers planned a series of media releases in the lead up to the event, considering both what would be of value to their target markets (information on kids' activities for parents), what would be interesting and newsworthy for media (all the quirky things at the festival such as avocado ice-cream), and what would encourage visitors to stay longer (ideas to fill a short break in Blackbutt).

Once their media releases had been published by newspapers locally or in their source markets, the content was reused on their blog at www.avofest.com.au, and then shared via their social media and newsletter.



Media tips

- Appoint a media/publicity officer.
- Collate a media database.
- Reinforce your event's key messages.
- Provide clear and precise, newsworthy, and accurate information.
- Offer interviews, exclusive stories, and interesting photo opportunities.
- Invite the media to attend the event.
- Acknowledge and thank the media when they support your event. Establish good relationships with the media.
- Send your media releases to your key stakeholders to keep them in the loop.
- If buying advertisements, be clear as to where they will be located.
- Keep track of coverage of your event – it is useful for evaluation, to show sponsors, and to include in grant acquittals.

Media release format

- Write 'Media Release' as the heading with the date at the top of the release.
- The first paragraph should cover what is happening (what is newsworthy), who, when and where.
- Keep the release short – one page or less and include the most interesting and newsworthy facts first.
- At the end include contact details (name, phone, email, website), and where tickets are being sold.
- Keep the sentences short and simple, concentrating on the key facts in the order of importance.
- Direct quotes can be used to get across an opinion, or to add colour to the story.

Marketing partners

Tapping into the networks of partners to extend the reach of your marketing is worthwhile.

- Reach out to East Gippsland Marketing Inc, East Gippsland Shire Council, and Destination Gippsland for marketing advice and to learn about collaborative marketing opportunities, but also to provide them with information on your event so that they can help promote it via their channels (Find their contact details on page 28).
- Now that you have added your stakeholders to your email database, provide your stakeholders with information so they can help promote your event to attract more visitors, which in turn results in a bigger economic impact for the community. Develop and share a marketing kit to make this easy.

Marketing kit

A marketing kit is a Word document and an online folder that contains:

- information on your event
- information on its target markets
- your marketing objectives
- an overview of your planned marketing activities
- links to your event's marketing channels (website and social media accounts, including the Facebook event)
- event logo, brand story, and copy on the event with key messages (e.g., 50 and 100 words)
- graphics that can be shared on social media (designed by a graphic designer)
- High-resolution images of the event (High-resolution images need to be 300dpi minimum).
- a link to Council's [Leveraging Events Toolkit for Businesses](#)
- a request for information to help promote their participation in the festival, if relevant.

Local communications

Develop a communications plan for the channels you will use to tell the community about your event, any impacts it will have such as road closures, and the opportunities for businesses and community groups to benefit from it. Provide plenty of notice and remind locals that your event is a great excuse to invite their out-of-region relatives and friends to visit (a great way that locals can support your efforts to increase the economic benefit of your event for the community). Consider how locals find out local information such as local radio stations and newspapers, community newsletters, posters, letterbox drops, corflute roadside signage, and street banners.



Evaluate your marketing activities

To improve your marketing planning for the next time you hold your event, it is important to measure the effectiveness of the tactics you undertook and compare different tactics to learn which are the most effective at helping you achieve your objectives.

For example, did you get more visitors to your website, or sell more tickets, from the money you spent on newspaper ads or on social media ads? You can only tell which provides the best return on investment by measuring how effective they are.

Your website or ticketing website analytics can provide information on the source of clicks to the website from other online locations, such as from social media ads, but it cannot show where someone who typed in your website address saw that. A way to measure the effectiveness of print ads is to have a landing page or QR code that is used exclusively for the print ads, such as www.yourwebsite.com.au/tickets.

Common ways to measure the outcomes include:

Type of KPI	Means of measurement
Ticket sales	Total ticket sales
Numbers of out-of-region visitors	Attendee survey (postcode)
Numbers of overnight visitors	Attendee survey (How many nights did you stay in East Gippsland on this trip?)
Average visitor expenditure	Attendee survey (See survey on page 27 for how to phrase this question)
Number of newsletter subscribers	
Number of social media followers and engagement	Social media analytics
Numbers of visitors to your website	Website analytics (typically Google analytics)
Media attention	If an article is published in a newspaper or magazine, the media's advertising rate sheet can provide an estimate of how many people saw it Keep track of all articles and interviews broadcast about your event as they are published so that you can estimate reach afterwards
Marketing reach	A sum of all the people who were exposed to information about your event, say in the four months prior to your event, such as • Attendees/ticket sales • Visitors to your website • Reach of your social media • Newsletter subscribers or those who opened your newsletters (which is found in your group email reports) • Media reach

Encourage repeat visitation

Aside from delivering a great experience, and connecting your event with its destination, other ways you can encourage repeat visitation include:

- Using your event's marketing channels (such as social media and newsletter) year-round to promote other local events that would be of interest to your attendees.
- Providing incentives for visitors to come back, such as exclusive offers for attendees. An example might be a 'stay two nights get the third night free' offer at several local accommodations for the off-peak season. Consider asking your local Business and Tourism Association if they could coordinate the development of such an offer.





How to measure your event's economic impact

Your event's economic impact measures new money coming into your local economy. It does not include spending by locals.

Why measure your event's economic impact?

Measuring and reporting the economic impact of your event helps with:

- securing and acquitting grants.
- securing sponsorship.
- benchmarking the event to compare with other years.
- increasing the profile of the event which helps with attracting media attention.
- community pride and partnerships.

Set KPIs

Firstly, set KPIs for your event (key performance indicators or key things you are trying to achieve), such as:

- The number of out-of-region intrastate and interstate attendees.
- The number of visitor nights (the number of overnight visitors x how many nights they stayed on average).
- Direct expenditure (how much visitors spent in the shire).

What to measure

To see how well you are doing on achieving your KPIs, you will need to measure:

- Visitor origins (Where did your visitors come from?).
- Their primary purpose for visiting the region (Did they visit the because of your event or a different reason?).
- Length of stay (How many nights did they stay in the shire?).
- Expenditure (How much did they spend in the shire?).
- Attendance: total number of attendees and total attendances (one visitor attending your event for two days is two attendances).
- Event organiser income and expenditure.

How to survey visitors

Be sure to survey your attendees, such as via an online survey website such as SurveyMonkey. Prepare your survey so it is ready to be distributed via your social media, newsletter, emails to ticketholders, and website immediately after your event.

Include questions in your survey about:

- Visitor origins (What is their postcode?).
- Was the event their primary purpose for visiting the region? (If not, did they extend their stay to attend the event?).
- Length of stay (How many nights did they stay in region on that trip?).
- Expenditure (How much did they spend on each of these? food, tickets, transport, retail, accommodation, souvenirs, attractions, and incidentals. This will help identify opportunities and potential partnerships.
- Attendances (How many days did they attend the event?).
- Marketing (How did they hear about the event?).

When you sell tickets online, or run a competition, see if you can ask any of these questions at that time, such as their postcode.

How to estimate attendance

If you have a ticketed event or a main entry where you can use a counter to count attendees, your attendance count will be accurate.

If you have a free event with multiple entry points, or multiple venues, you may need to estimate attendance. Many event organisers, emergency services and media overestimate attendance significantly. Be more accurate by using:

- Density counts (number of people counted in e.g. 20 m² x total event site in m²).
- Counts from aerial photos.
- Give wristbands to every attendee – e.g. green for local, blue for intrastate, red for interstate, then how many given out = attendance.
- For multi-day free events, use your survey to determine how many days attendees attended.

Reporting

Write a simple post-event report to report on how the event did in achieving its KPIs, such as:

- How many out-of-region intrastate and interstate attendees did your event attract?
- How many visitor nights did they stay?
- How much in total did visitors spend in the shire?
- How much did you spend locally as an event organiser, and what percentage of your cash expenditure did you spend locally?
- How much did money community groups raise at your event?

Be sure to ask for, and include human stories in your report, such as:

- A local community group raised all of the funds they need for the year or for a project at your event.
- What a charity was able to achieve with funds raised at your event (particularly if they did something for locals).
- A business had a record trading day for that time of the year.
- What a sponsor said about the value of being involved with the event for their business or for achieving their desired outcomes.
- Positive testimonials from attendees and locals about the event.

Distribute a feel-good story about all the ways your event has benefited your community.

- Write a media release and distribute it to local media.
- Share it with your stakeholders such as marketing organisations, funding organisations, Council, sponsors and participating businesses and community groups, so they can all feel good about playing a part in the event's success.
- After you've allowed time for media to publish the media release, re-use the content as a blog article, then share that article via your social media and newsletter, sending to your database of attendees, participants and stakeholders.
- Ask your stakeholders to also share the news with their networks.

Organisations that can help you

The following organisations may be able to help your event increase its economic benefit for the community. Find more information on how each type of organisation might be able to help below.

East Gippsland Shire Council

East Gippsland Shire Council's Economic Development Team:

- Attracts major external events to East Gippsland
- Shares information on best practice event management
- Supports funding applications for events
- Provides event permits
- Provides advice

For more information, contact the Economic Development team via email at events@egipps.vic.gov.au.

East Gippsland Marketing Inc

East Gippsland Marketing Inc. (EGMI) communicates and collaborates with East Gippsland businesses to develop strong marketing campaigns that benefit the region.

EGMI is directed by a board of 13 founders, visionaries and business owners who represent East Gippsland municipal stakeholders, professionals and a variety of industries.

EGMI is supported by East Gippsland businesses and the East Gippsland Shire.

EGMI:

- Develops and implements an annual marketing plan and a three-year strategic plan.
- Undertakes local and external marketing activities in conjunction with Destination Gippsland's marketing activities.
- Coordinates, in collaboration with East Gippsland Shire Council, the provision of high-quality visitor services and visitor experiences.
- Builds industry networks that foster tourism and investment growth through a cooperative, professional approach.

Remember to follow East Gippsland's Love East Gippsland Facebook and Instagram accounts

For more information, contact EGMI at info@egmi.com.au or visit egmi.com.au.

Events Gippsland

Part of Destination Gippsland, Events Gippsland, the Regional Tourism Board and peak tourism organisation in eastern Victoria, is developing resources to support events across Gippsland and help stakeholders leverage events.

Keep an eye out for Events Gippsland's upcoming Ambassador Program, a digital program to help businesses understand the significant role they play in events and the visitor economy.

Destination Gippsland provides training for businesses, such as webinars on effective marketing and social media tactics. Find out what is on offer at www.visitgippsland.com.au/destination-gippsland/industry-development/industry-training-events

Learn more at www.visitgippsland.com.au/destination-gippsland

Business and Tourism Associations and Chambers of Commerce

East Gippsland's local Business and Tourism Associations (BTAs) consist of businesses working together to:

- Grow economic prosperity
- Create and promote opportunities for business and tourism growth
- Provide businesses with tools and opportunities to grow, including professional development, networking and marketing opportunities, skill development programs, and employee benefit and cost-saving programs.

Reach out to your local BTA or Chamber of Commerce to discuss opportunities for leveraging local events to get more value out of them, including opportunities to collaborate with other local businesses.

These organisations can help with questions, share information, and provide introductions to businesses and community groups who could help realise your idea. As volunteer organisations, quite often BTAs do not have the capacity to help implement activities or implement them on behalf of local businesses.

You can contact the Economic Development team via email at economic.development@egipps.vic.gov.au for a full list of BTAs and Chambers in East Gippsland.



East Gippsland Shire Council
Maximising Benefits from Events Toolkit for Event Organisers
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