



2025/2026 – A YEAR IN REVIEW / DELIVERABLES REPORT
Dunedin Festivals and Events Plan

Let's
Celebrate
Ōtepoti



DUNEDIN | kaunihera
CITY COUNCIL | a-rohe o
Ōtepoti

Let's celebrate Ōtepoti

The first year of the Dunedin Festivals and Events Plan has achieved bold milestones, laying a foundation for an exciting future, with strong momentum now established for continued growth and development.

Backed by targeted investment and a shared commitment to success, this year has seen significant change in how Dunedin supports, develops, and delivers events. This has strengthened partnerships, built sector capability, and created stronger collaboration between Council and stakeholders.

From a reimagined Christmas in the Garden that brought fresh energy to a cherished community tradition, to a more place-based, mana whenua-led Waitangi Day experience delivered in partnership with Kāti Huirapa Rūnaka ki Puketeraki, through to supporting existing events to develop long-term commercial sustainability plans and welcoming international hockey back to Dunedin for the first time in more than 19 years, the momentum is unmistakable.

With Eclipse 2028 still to come and a growing network of opportunities emerging, the impact of this work is already being felt across the sector, positioning the city well for future growth and development.

While this report captures achievements across a single financial year, the work underway is being delivered through a strategic, long-term approach focused on building a sustainable, resilient, and high-performing events sector. Many event outcomes, including visitor growth, sponsorship development, audience loyalty, and

increased national profile, are realised over multiple years of sustained investment and delivery.

Events also continue to play an important role in fostering social connection, civic pride, and community wellbeing across Dunedin.

“

It was successful event for us and we are pleased to share we managed to serve 410 local community, tourists and students. Obviously we were happy with income earned too.

Otepotea – Vendor – Chinese New Year 2026s

A year of achievements

1

international hockey test series, the first international test series in 19 years.

1

Z Manu World Champs celebrating the art of the Manu!

\$5,546,611

tourism/visitor spend from hosting events

25%

of stall holders at George Street Market took more than \$2,000 of takings/45% took between \$500 - \$2,000

2 stages **80** performers at Eats and Beats on Bath Street

\$4,766,854

net benefit as a result of hosting events*

400,000+

digital media impressions Chinese New Year

1,000

(estimated) attendance Waitangi Day celebrations

1

Development of a step-by-step event planning guide for organisers

1.75M

Estimated views of organic Dunedin content across Z Manu World Champ channels

13

new giant lanterns at "First Light Exhibition" (part of 2026 Chinese New Year).

250

market stalls at George Street Market

7

international performers at George Street Market

5

reimagined DCC Civic events

35

city events supported by Enterprise Dunedin through funding, advisory, or operational assistance

10,000

(estimated) attendance at Matariki mā Puaka 2025 drone show

95%

of events attendees were satisfied or very satisfied with their event experience at George Street Market

100%

Amigos Restaurant (Bath Street Eats and Beats) saw 100% increase in covers on a standard Saturday (lunch/dinner) trading day

1

Planning underway for the 2028 Total Solar Eclipse

*(events evaluated by Fresh Info)

Our plan on a page



An eventful year


A key objective of the Plan is to achieve a balanced, year-round programme of events that supports community vibrancy and visitor activity across peak, shoulder, and off-peak periods. Achieving this balanced seasonal spread requires proactive procurement of events to fill gaps in the calendar, helping to sustain year-round economic activity, strengthen visitor engagement, support local businesses during quieter periods, and enhance the city's overall events programme.



July 2025
Off peak
Puaka Mataraki Festival
New Zealand International Science Festival
All Blacks v France Test



August 2025
Off peak
University of Otago Graduation
Whānau Mārama New Zealand International Film Festival
Big Sing Finale



September 2025
Shoulder season
Otago Polytechnic Graduation
Otago Polyfest
Emerson's Dunedin Marathon



October 2025
Shoulder season
Dunedin Writers and Readers Festival
Port Chalmers Seafood Festival
Ōtepoti Dunedin Heritage Festival



November 2025
Shoulder season
BLACKCAPS v West Indies T20
Dunedin Craft Beer and Food Festival
Z Manu World Champs



December 2025
Shoulder season
University of Otago Graduation Parades
Christmas in the Garden
New Years Eve



January 2026
Shoulder season
NZ Masters Games
Vantage Black Sticks Summer of Hockey



February 2026
Peak season
Waitangi Day Celebrations
George Street Market/Eats and Beats (soft) launch
Foundations Festival
Chinese Cultural Festival
Chinese New Year Celebrations
Toitu lantern display "A Shared Light" as part of Chinese New Year



March 2026
Peak season
Sunday Sounds
White Ferns v Zimbabwe ODI's
Dunedin Fringe Festival
Moana Nui Festival
South Dunedin Street Festival



April 2026
Shoulder season
Dunedin Food Truck Market (monthly)
Otago Rally
Wild Dunedin Ōtepoti Mohoao New Zealand Festival of Nature



May 2026
Off peak
University of Otago Graduation Parades



June 2026
Off peak
Midwinter Carnival

Measuring Economic Impact

This year Enterprise Dunedin purchased the licence to use Event Economics (owned by Fresh Info), an economics consultancy specialising in event economics, research, forecasting and strategy, whose evaluation tool is helping us make more informed, objective, data-driven decisions, supported by independent evaluation tools that strengthen evidence-based investment and procurement decisions.

Going forward, this enables better decisions on the use of ratepayer funding based on measurable return on investment to the city, including the ability to capture social impact outcomes.

Events currently evaluated through Fresh Info included:

- 2026 Otago Rally
- 2026 Wild Dunedin*
- 2026 NZ Masters Games
- 2025 Dunedin Craft Beer and Food Festival
- 2025 Port Chalmers Seafood Festival

\$800,000

total investment for year one Dunedin Festivals and Events Plan across entire strategy

*results pending

Photo: 2026 NZ Masters Games. Credit: NZ Masters Games

Return on Investment

5

events evaluated by Event Economics

1.31

average ROI, meaning that for every \$1 invested, an estimated \$1.31 has been returned to the city

25,059

visitor nights from hosting events (not including Wild Dunedin)

\$5,546,611

visitor spend from hosting events (events evaluated)

\$4,766,854

net benefit from hosting events (events evaluated)

DATA DRIVEN INSIGHTS

Otago Rally

5,290

people attended the event

1,994

visitors were attracted to the host region by the event

7,860

visitor nights generated from hosting the event

\$2,189,948

of tourism expenditure generated from hosting the event

The event generated a net benefit to the host region of

\$1,030,760*

*This takes into account all of the measured social and economic costs and benefits of hosting the event.

**The cost-benefit analysis estimates the value of the resources consumed by the event (gross costs) and compares this with the value created by the event (gross benefit).

1.41**

(or 41% ROI) - the benefit to cost ratio for the host region **

94%

of residents agreed that hosting an event like the Otago Rally increased their pride in Dunedin.

64%

of visiting event attendees agreed or strongly agreed that their experience attending this event has improved their perception of Dunedin city as a place to live.



Tour European Rally (TER) series insights:*

- Broadcast in **nine** different languages.
- Dunedin footage shown in **85%** countries in the world.
- Total viewer estimate **2.3m**
- A collection of rally events around the world considered to be in iconic locations.

DATA DRIVEN INSIGHTS

Emerson's Dunedin Marathon

8,439

people attended the event

3,769

athletes took part in the event

1,546

visitors were attracted to the host region by the event

2,699

visitor nights generated from hosting the event

\$467,584

of tourism expenditure generated from hosting the event

The event generated a net benefit to the host region of

\$1,032,399*

1.42

(42% ROI) - The benefit to cost ratio for the host region **

88%

of residents agreed that hosting an event like the Dunedin Emerson's Marathon increased their pride in Dunedin.

62%

of visiting event attendees agreed or strongly agreed that their experience attending this event has improved their perception of Dunedin city as a place to visit.

*This takes into account all of the measured social and economic costs and benefits of hosting the event.

**The cost-benefit analysis estimates the value of the resources consumed by the event (gross costs) and compares this with the value created by the event (gross benefit).

Image: Emerson's Dunedin Marathon. Credit: DunedinNZ

DATA DRIVEN INSIGHTS

Dunedin Craft Beer and Food Festival

11,312

people attended the event

The event generated a net benefit to the host region of

\$1,479,404*

2,624

visitors were attracted to the host region by the event

1.42*

(42% ROI) - the benefit to cost ratio for the host region**

4,529

visitor nights generated from hosting the event

\$870,257

of tourism expenditure generated from hosting the event

*This takes into account all of the measured social and economic costs and benefits of hosting the event.

**The cost-benefit analysis estimates the value of the resources consumed by the event (gross costs) and compares this with the value created by the event (gross benefit).

Image: 2025 Dunedin Craft Beer and Food Festival. Credit: Alex Lovell-Smith, Walsh & Beck.

2026 New Zealand Masters Games

6,679

people attended the event

2,767

visitors were attracted to the host region by the event

9,363

visitor nights generated from hosting the event

\$1,880,744

of tourism expenditure generated from hosting the event

The event generated a net benefit to the host region of

\$1,168,382*

1.35

(35% ROI) - the benefit to cost ratio for the host region was **

89%

of residents agreed that hosting an event like the New Zealand Masters Games increased their pride in Dunedin.

67%

of visiting event attendees agreed or strongly agreed that their experience attending this event has improved their perception of Dunedin city as a place to visit.

*This takes into account all of the measured social and economic costs and benefits of hosting the event.

**The cost-benefit analysis estimates the value of the resources consumed by the event (gross costs) and compares this with the value created by the event (gross benefit).

Building a Sustainable Event Portfolio

Growing and developing city-led events provides greater strategic control of our events portfolio. It enables the city to shape event narratives, align programming with seasonal priorities and economic objectives, and deliver consistent messaging that reflects local identity and community aspirations.

Building a portfolio of enduring events also reduces reliance on a small number of high-cost major events, while creating stronger opportunities for long-term partnerships with mana whenua, businesses, community organisations, and key city stakeholders.

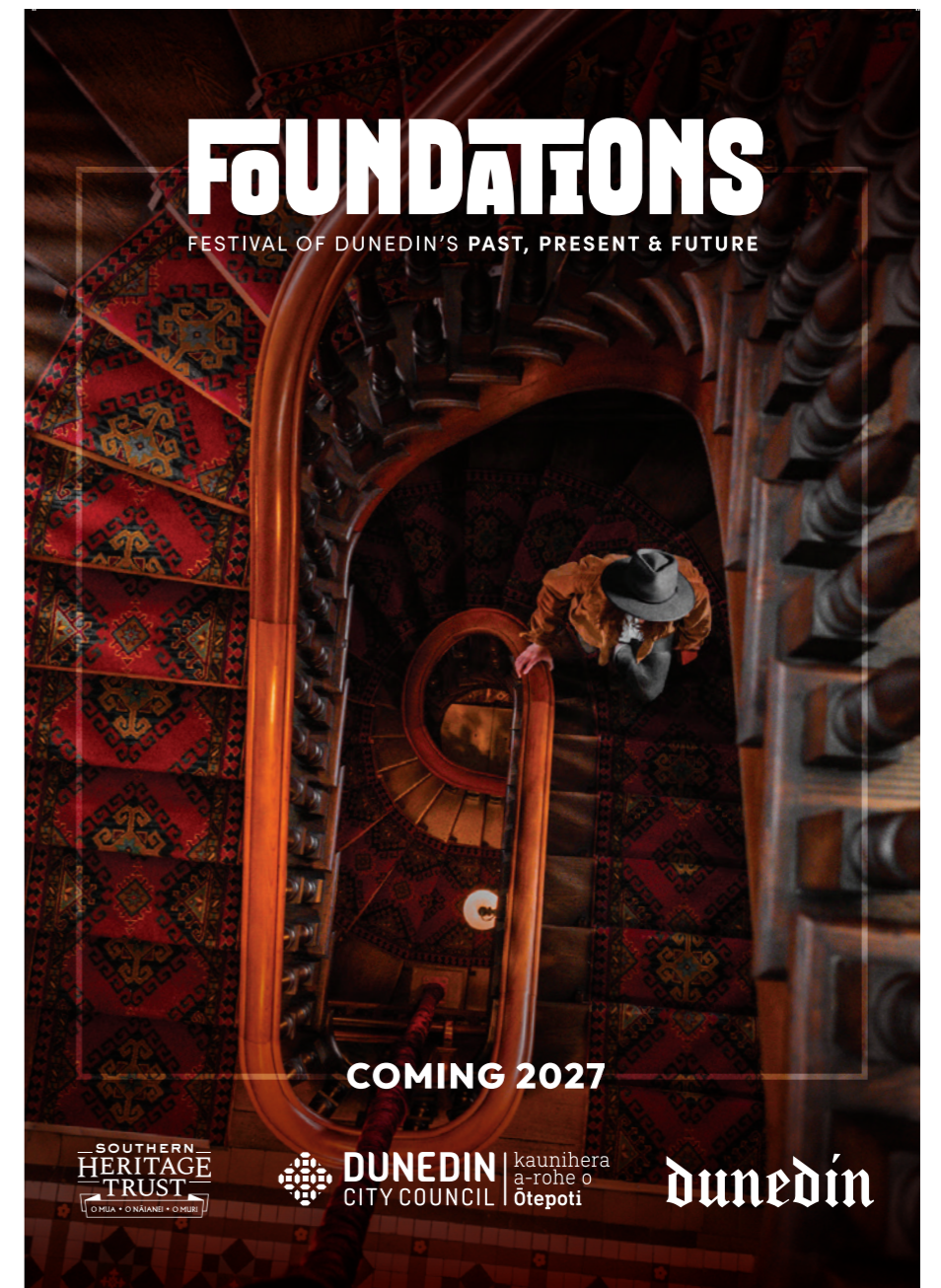
Foundations Festival: Festival of Dunedin's Past, Present and Future

A new city-wide festival celebrating Dunedin's rich heritage and evolving cultural identity will launch in 2027, a collaboration between the Southern Heritage Trust and the Dunedin City Council.

Foundations Festival will replace the city's long-running Heritage Festival, building on its legacy while expanding its scope to engage broader and more diverse audiences and ultimately drive increased visitation. The new festival will bring together history, creativity, food, music and community, honouring the stories that have shaped Dunedin while exploring how they continue to influence the city today and into the future.

The new festival represents an important evolution in how heritage is shared and celebrated allowing Dunedin's rich heritage to continue to be celebrated, but in a way that is more inclusive, dynamic and relevant to contemporary audiences.

FOUNDATIONS
FESTIVAL OF DUNEDIN'S
PAST, PRESENT & FUTURE



Dark Mode Dunedin

On 22 July 2028, a rare total solar eclipse will pass over Dunedin, creating a once-in-a-generation opportunity for the city and for New Zealand. As the final place on Earth to view the eclipse before sunset, Dunedin offers a globally unique experience with strong tourism, media, and storytelling potential.

Occurring eight days after Matariki, the timing creates a rare opportunity to connect astronomy, mātauranga Māori, culture, science, and the arts through an internationally significant programme. The proposed vision is an eight-day festival developed in partnership with mana whenua, government agencies, research institutions, tourism partners, and city stakeholders.

Staff have submitted stage one of an application to the Ministry of Business, Innovation and Employment Major Events Fund, seeking support for delivery and to position Dunedin and New Zealand on the global stage.

Beyond immediate visitor expenditure, the event also presents long-term opportunities to enhance Dunedin's international profile, strengthen regional partnerships, support the visitor economy during winter, and create enduring cultural and educational legacy outcomes for the city.



Last total solar eclipse visible from Dunedin
year 1163

next visible total solar eclipse
year 2431

Projected attendance

5,000 international and
30,000 domestic visitors

Estimated potential economic impact of up to

\$30million

Event Procurement

Z Manu World Champs

After two successful seasons, the Z Manu World Champs expanded from 8 – 9 New Zealand cities. Eight official qualifiers including Dunedin were held. The Z Manu World Champs were timed to be held with other city activations including Santa Parade, Christmas in the Gardens to create a “festival weekend”.

77 entries

100+ volunteer hours

250+ push play participants

1.75m+
views of organic Dunedin content
across Z Manu World Champ
channels

1,000 (estimated) spectators

12 volunteers

Vantage Black Sticks Summer of Hockey

January 2026 saw international hockey back in Dunedin after a 19-year absence. As part of the Hockey NZ event procurement, Dunedin will host the top tier secondary school's Rankin Cup and India Shield later in the year. The test series supported visitation during a shoulder-season period.

8 matches **4** match days

85%
of tickets holders rated the event
experience as a 4 or 5 out of 5

572
23% of ticket holders came from
outside Dunedin

3 nights
average stay in city by spectators.



Image: 2025 Z Manu World Champs. Credit: Quantum Events.

“

Hockey New Zealand and our Black Sticks Women were proud to host the USA and Japan for a test series in Dunedin in January 2026. Our partnership with the City Council, the Otago Hockey Association, and local businesses was a real success. The hockey facility in Dunedin is a fantastic venue to host international hockey.

Michelle Hollands, Chief Executive, Hockey New Zealand

Civic Events Reimagined

Christmas in the Garden

To help drive seasonal visitation and economic activity, the refreshed event was positioned as part of a broader weekend experience, packaging community events alongside retail initiatives such as Black Friday sales to encourage longer stays, increased spending, and greater city-wide participation. The programme also created a strong community feel-good atmosphere, giving residents and visitors additional reasons to come into the city, connect, and celebrate together.



These initiatives also contributed to increased city-centre activation and encouraged visitors to spend longer in the central city.

Headline act directed by **Doug Kamo** with the DKCM Christmas All Stars

1,500 Estimated attendance

93% of event attendees had a good or excellent experience

Enhanced event footprint allowing for additional staging, games and food truck alley

42.5 volunteer hours contributed to the event by Rotary and Task Force Green

George Street/Eats and Beats

Enhancements to the George Street Market included the introduction of an extended Eats and Beats precinct, with the newly renovated Bath Street temporarily activated as a dedicated food and entertainment zone. Extending the market until 8pm encouraged longer visitor stays, increased foot traffic and created greater trading opportunities for stallholders and food vendors. This investment strengthened the market's appeal as a vibrant city-centre experience while delivering tangible benefits for those participating in it.

25% of stallholders generated more than \$2,000 in market takings (DCC post event survey).

45% of stallholders generated between \$500 - \$2,000 in takings

25,000 estimated event attendees

7 international performers

95% satisfaction stallholder rate

7,500 passenger trips taken free courtesy of Otago Regional Council

80 performers over 2 music stages (Eats and Beats)

“

Sales! A great market! People turn up to buy.

2025 George Street Market Stallholder

Cultural Partnerships and Celebrations

Puaka Matariki and Waitangi Day programming continued to strengthened partnership-led delivery with mana whenua, particularly through collaboration with Kāti Huirapa Rūnaka ki Puketeraki and wider Māori organisations across Ōtepoti and the region. Programming increasingly centred mana whenua leadership, local narratives, tikanga, mātauranga Māori and place-based storytelling.

2025 Puaka Matariki Festival

The 2025 Puaka Matariki Festival continued the evolution of civic events in Ōtepoti Dunedin, with a stronger focus on community-led, culturally grounded, and locally responsive programming.

5,000 total festival attendance

26 Festival events delivered

10,000 estimated attendance Matariki mā Puaka drone show

21.9k hotel bed nights July 2025*

17.1K motel and apartment bed nights July 2025*

* Data from Ministry Business Innovation and Employment (MBIE) Data Accommodation Programme

Waitangi Day 2026

In 2026, Waitangi Day marked a significant evolution in civic commemorations in Ōtepoti Dunedin, shifting from a traditional central-city event to a place-based, mana whenua-led experience delivered in partnership with Kāti Huirapa Rūnaka ki Puketeraki and, for the first time in decades, relocating from the Octagon to the Dunedin Botanic Gardens to create a welcoming, accessible, and whānau-friendly environment.



The refreshed programme celebrated local identity and cultural connection, creating space for communities to see themselves reflected in the city's events and public life through highlights including mana whenua-led Cultural Journeys in Karitāne, guided hikoī, waka experiences, kapa haka, kai, and whānau activities.

1,000 estimated attendance (Botanic Gardens celebrations)

56 Karitāne Cultural Journey Participants

63,449 Facebook and Instagram reach

CULTURAL PARTNERSHIPS AND CELEBRATIONS

Chinese Cultural Celebrations

The 2026 Chinese Cultural Festival marked a significant evolution from a single-night celebration toward a broader, city-wide cultural programme focused on authenticity, participation, accessibility and community partnership. Delivered in partnership with Lan Yuan Dunedin Chinese Garden, and the Chinese community, the festival introduced new programming streams, expanded activations, and stronger Chinese community input into the development and direction of the event.

A key highlight was “A Shared Light”, an exhibition of 13 giant lanterns at Toitū Otago Settlers Museum.

9,000+ Total Festival Attendance

5 Core Events

6,000 Main Chinese New Year Event Attendance,

Media Reach, **400,000+** digital impressions

1,500 “First Light” Lantern Display Attendance (Toitū)

Social Media Reach, **200,000+** video views

2,000 estimated Lan Yuan visitors



“ Meridian Mall loved having the lanterns up and being part of the events, we would love to build on this for next year.

“ We want local Chinese businesses to feel they are waiting for this time of year.

Dunedin Chinese Business owner

Image: Chinese Cultural Festival. Credit: DunedinNZ

Building Capacity

Building capability across the events sector has remained a key priority, with targeted workshops focused on funding, revenue diversification, and long-term event sustainability. This investment supports a more capable, connected, and sustainable events sector.

Workshop: Event Development & Growth – Building Sustainable Futures.

Facilitator: Chris Simpson – Chief Executive Major Events Group (MEG)

- Founder of Spur Ltd and Head of Major Events Tātaki Auckland Limited, 2021 - 2024
- 12 Major Community and Premier event managers and Board members attended the workshop

Workshop: Writing funding applications that stand out.

Facilitator: Olha Viazenko, Community Events Advisor

- 50 community event attendees

Youth Council Workshop: From concept to delivery – how to bring event ideas to life.

Facilitator: Olha Viazenko, Community Events Advisor

- 15 Youth Council Members from a variety of schools

2 events supported with industry specialists to develop commercial sustainability plans.

“

Chris’s workshop was highly beneficial for iD Fashion. We are already implementing his advice as we engage prospective sponsors for the 2027 event.

Victoria Muir, iD Event Manager

“

The workshop was a really refreshing experience. I loved connecting with others in the event community, and getting the chance to meet the DCC team members, it was genuinely amazing.

Workshop attendee

“

We have learned a lot of valuable information from you!

Dunedin Youth Council members



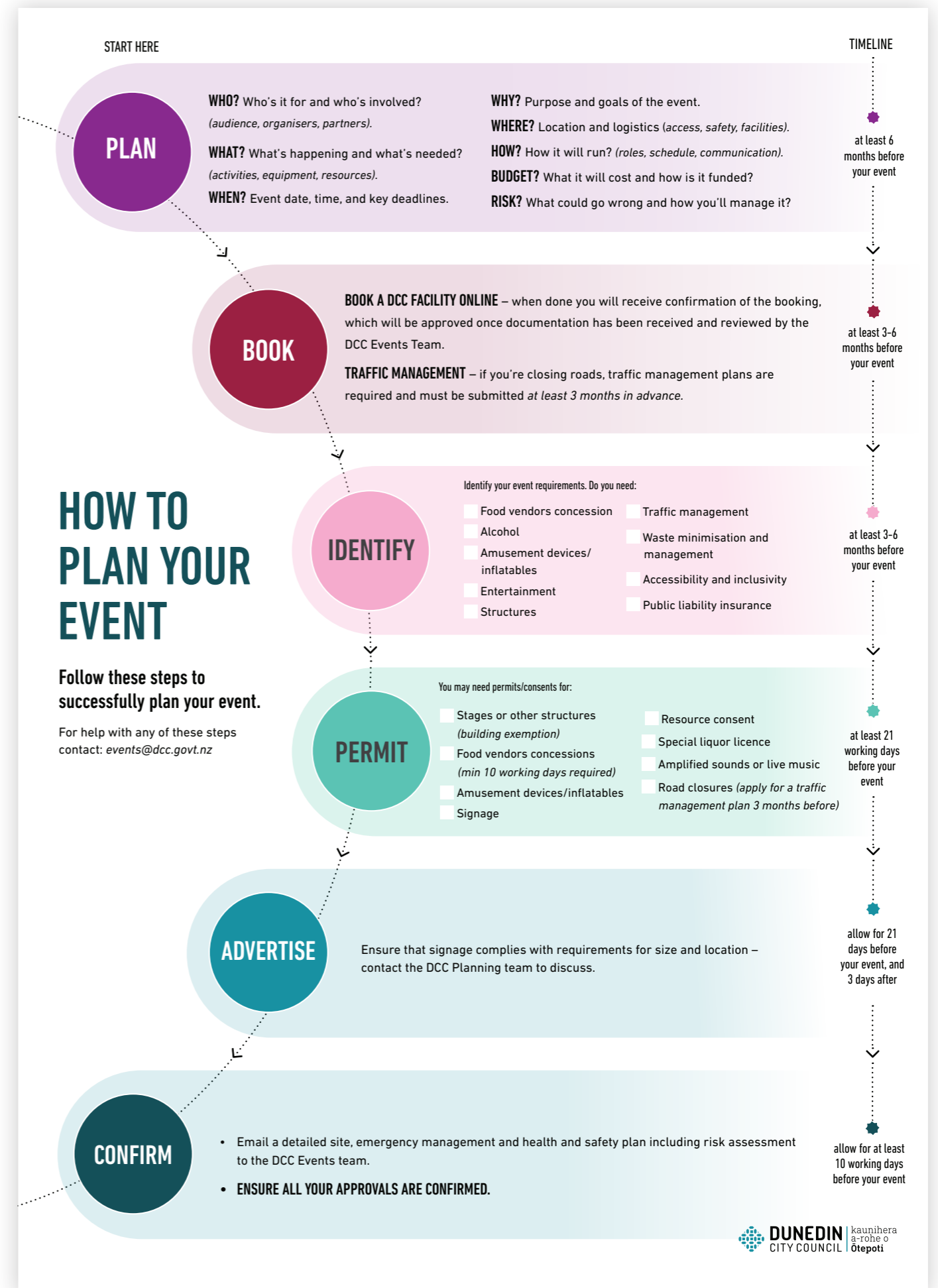
Events Made Easy

Work is underway to make it easier for event organisers to plan and deliver events in Dunedin by creating clearer, more streamlined processes and planning tools. These include:

- step-by-step guidance from initial enquiry through to booking
- practical resources and internal checklists
- progress toward a multi-year resource consent framework for Logan Park to enable longer-term planning
- the development of a centralised event information pack covering council event spaces, compliance requirements, permits, and operational guidance.

Together, these initiatives aim to reduce complexity, improve certainty, and support more efficient event delivery across the city.

Reducing barriers and improving clarity for event organisers remains a key focus of the Festival and Events Plan.



Looking Forward 2026/2027

The events team are building on the progress and momentum started in 2025/26 and there's a lot to look forward to in the coming year/s:

Event attraction & procurement

- Supporting delivery of two national sporting bid events, including Rankin Cup and Indian Shield (31 August – 5 September 2025, 32 teams), projected to deliver over 4,000 visitor bed nights for the city
- Securing women's-focused sporting events through Australian-based partner Sports Marketing Australia
- Developing a Major Events Prospectus in conjunction with Sports Marketing Australia to support future event attraction
- Maintaining ongoing discussions with external event and music promoters to build the future events pipeline
- Progressing Foundations Festival as part of the emerging events programme

Sector capability

- Continuing commercial sustainability planning with major community and premier event organisers
- Planning further industry capability-building workshops to strengthen sector capacity
- Continuing evaluation of events based on return on investment to the city to support more evidence-based decision-making

Civic events

- Delivering an enhanced 2026 Matariki mā Puaka drone show, Puaka Matariki Festival and Waitangi Day event in partnership with mana whenua
- Delivering an enhanced Chinese Cultural Festival in partnership with Chinese community
- Delivering a refreshed 2026 New Year's Eve celebration, including the return of fireworks

Eclipse development

- Continuing development of the Total Solar Eclipse 2028 opportunity, maintaining long-term programme momentum and readiness, working closely with central government and city stakeholders

Ngā mihi