



Town of East Gwillimbury Events Strategy

Draft Report: April 16, 2025



Photo Credit: Town of East Gwillimbury

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Project Overview





Photo Credit: Town of East Gwillimbury

Introduction

The Town of East Gwillimbury and community organizations host a variety of community events throughout the year. It is evident that community members truly appreciate these events, which not only highlight the town's community spirit but also enhances the quality of life for residents.

It is important for the Town of East Gwillimbury to prepare for its population growth, a rapidly diversifying community, the need for sustainability, and the rising demand for events to ensure that the community continues to experience high-quality events. For this reason, the Town is taking proactive steps by developing an Events Strategy. The strategy will prioritize planning efforts, provide a clear roadmap for future decisions, and ensure that residents continue to enjoy events that bring the community together. The strategy advances the Town's Strategic Plan priorities.

“

I loved the Santa Clause Parade. I will never forget the magic in my son's eyes at 15 months old seeing his first Santa Clause Parade!

– Survey Respondent

Process

The project has five, interconnected phases. This report represents the final deliverable.



Project Team

The Project Steering Committee was established to oversee the project, provide input, and give feedback on the overall direction of the strategy. The strategy was developed by the project consultant.

“The Noon Years Eve Event is amazing every year. My kids look forward to it and it is a fun family tradition.”
– Survey Respondent



Photo Credit: Town of East Gwillimbury

Overview of Research

A variety of primary and secondary research activities were conducted to develop this report. Primary research was gathered through a community survey, community group and advisory committee input workshops, resident input workshops, interviews with staff and comparable communities, a Town staff input workshop, extended management team input workshop, council input workshops, a community tour, and in-person pop up. Secondary research consisted of a review of key internal, regional, provincial, and national documents, trends research, and benchmarking research.

1. Surveys Administered

- a. Community Survey (562 responses)

2. Meetings Conducted

- a. Project Steering Committee Meetings
Dates: May 29, June 4, June 13, September 24, October 1, and October 24, 2024
- b. Community Group and Advisory Committee Input Workshops
Dates: July 9 and July 16, 2024
- c. Extended Management Team Input Workshop
Date: July 11, 2024
- d. Town Staff Input Workshop*
Date: July 16, 2024
- e. Resident Input Workshop
Dates: July 17, 2024
- f. Council Input Workshops
Dates: July 23 and July 24, 2024
- g. Engagement Pop-up at Music Nights Event
Date: July 23, 2024
- h. In-Person Community Tour
Date: July 24, 2024

* Including staff from the following departments: Communications and Customer Service; Recreation, Community Engagement and Events; Parks Development and Operations; Municipal Facilities; Fire and Emergency Services; East Gwillimbury Library; Office of the CAO.

3. Groups Engaged (through workshops, interviews, and/or survey)

The Town invited all community groups to participate in the process. The following chose to participate:

- | | |
|---|---|
| 1. Arts and Culture Advisory Committee | 17. Magic Windows |
| 2. Bombay Frankies | 18. Mount Albert and District Lions Club |
| 3. Carnival of Curiosities | 19. Mount Albert Group of Artists |
| 4. Chef Big Ts Smokehouse BBQ | 20. Mount Albert Sports Day 5K Run/Walk |
| 5. Community Martial Arts | 21. Mount Albert Sports Day and Spring Fair Committee |
| 6. Dancing Leaf | 22. O.E.I. Onsite Education Inc. |
| 7. Diversity and Inclusion Advisory Committee | 23. Palace Pizza & Spaghetti House |
| 8. East Gwillimbury Accessibility Committee | 24. Queensville Sharon Community Group |
| 9. Economic Development Advisory Committee | 25. R&D Bees and Trees |
| 10. Farmers Market Working Group | 26. Santa Claus Parade Working Group |
| 11. Garlicious Ontario | 27. Sharon Temple NHS |
| 12. Holly Berries Artisan Christmas Show | 28. Stars United Baton and Dance |
| 13. Jubilation Singers & Orchestra | 29. Sweet N Salty Elephant Ears |
| 14. Knowledge Probe Inc. and Brainy Games | 30. The Sunny Side of Life Co. |
| 15. Lakeside Community Church | 31. Yellow Brick House |
| 16. Lunar New Year Event Committee | 32. Town of East Gwillimbury Councillors |
| | 33. Town of East Gwillimbury Staff |

4. Documents Reviewed

- a. Strategies, plans, and other documents from the Town of East Gwillimbury.
- b. Reports, statistics, surveys, and planning documents.
- c. Research and plans from provincial and national sources.

2

Why Invest in Community Events?



There are many social, economic, and environmental benefits to be gained by investing in community events. The following describes these benefits.

Social Benefits



Improved Health and Well-Being

Events promote improved health and well-being for individuals and the community as a whole.^{1,2}



Education and Awareness

Events can serve as platforms for educating the community on various issues, such as health, safety, or environmental stewardship.



Community Cohesion

Events bring people together, fostering a sense of belonging and unity within the community.



Volunteerism and Civic Engagement

Community Events often rely on volunteers, promoting a culture of civic engagement and giving back to the community.



Connection and Socialization

Events provide opportunities for people to meet and interact with others they might not encounter in their daily lives, facilitating new friendships and connections.



Community Pride

Events can be a significant source of pride for communities.³



Cultural Exchange

Events often celebrate the diversity of a community, allowing for the sharing of a multitude of cultural traditions, foods, music, and art.

“

“I was so delighted to see the drag show at the Pride Month Farmers Market! It was fun, inclusive and family-friendly. I am so happy to be part of a community that celebrates our 2SLGBTQIA+ members.”

– Survey Respondent

Economic Benefits



Local Business Support

Events can boost the local economy by increasing demand for goods and services, such as restaurants, shops, and accommodation. This can serve to enhance business retention and attraction. Events are also an opportunity to include and highlight businesses owned by marginalized/equity-deserving groups.



Job Creation and Sustainment

New event-related jobs are created, and existing jobs are sustained.



Promotion of Local Products

Businesses can leverage events to increase awareness of their products and services through sponsorship and advertising opportunities.



Increased Tourism

Events draw visitors to the community, whose spending has a high multiplier effect.



Increased Resources for Governments

Increased economic activity can lead to increased resources for governments through taxation and service charges.

Environmental Benefits



Enhanced Value

Emotional connections are forged through events that provide enhanced value to built and natural environments.



Preservation and Revitalization

Events can contribute to the preservation and revitalization of built and natural environments.



Promotion of Sustainable Practices

Community events can embrace eco-friendly practices, such as reducing waste, recycling, using renewable energy sources, and promoting public transportation and carpooling.



Community Beautification

Events often involve beautification efforts, such as planting trees, flowers, or cleaning up litter, which contribute to a cleaner and more aesthetically pleasing community environment.

“

“My favourite event is always Music in the Park. The kids love to sing and dance in the field and it’s super relaxing with more than enough space for a family to find a good spot on the grass.”

– Survey Respondent

3

Analysis

Photo Credit: Town of East Gwillimbury



Community Overview

The Town of East Gwillimbury (EG) is a rapidly growing municipality that is comprised of both rural and urban communities. It is located in the northern part of York Region, and is within a 30-minute drive of Toronto. The Town is on lands originally used and occupied by the First Peoples of the Williams Treaties First Nations and other Indigenous Peoples.⁴

East Gwillimbury contains evolving historic villages as well as new and fast-growing urban areas and subdivisions. The town's varied communities each have their own character and identity. They include Holland Landing, Mount Albert, River Drive Park, Sharon, Queensville, and Harvest Hills.

A significant portion of the town is made up of forests, farms and recreational areas.⁵ The community's green spaces, including parks and trails, are well loved. The majority of residents report being interested in active outdoor activities.⁶

As the Town grows, a balance of urban village cores and an abundance of green space will be maintained, in particular, within the greenbelt and the provincially protected Oak Ridges Moraine.



The town is the York Region's top agricultural producer, accounting for 32% of all agricultural production in the region. The highest proportions of farms specialize in horse and other equine production, beef cattle ranching and vegetable farming.

Rapidly Growing Diverse Population

East Gwillimbury is a designated growth municipality in the Northern York Region. Its population in 2024 was estimated at 41,647.⁷ It is expected to more than double to 86,000 by 2031.⁸ Recent rates of growth have been significantly higher than in neighbouring census divisions and more than seven times higher than the provincial average.⁹

Population growth has also brought more ethnocultural diversity to the community. In 2021, just over 10,000 people self-identified as a "visible minority", compared with only 2,555 in 2016. (The term "visible minority" was used in the 2021 census. "Racialized" is commonly used as the preferred terminology. Statistics Canada is reviewing the visible minority concept).¹⁰

In 2021, the largest racialized communities included Chinese (11.1% of the total population), South Asian (4.7%) and West Asian (4.1%). EG is home to people from many other groups including Black, Filipino, Arab, Latin American, Southeast Asian, Korean and Japanese.¹¹ According to Statistics Canada data, EG's racialized population increased by 300% from 2016 to 2021.

The community is relatively young, with the average age in 2021 being 39.2. The proportion of people under 14 is growing, making up 19% of the population in 2021, up from 17.2% in 2016. There was a small decrease in the percentage of people aged 15-64 and those over 65 during that time.

The median after-tax income of households in East Gwillimbury in 2021 was \$102,000.¹² This is slightly higher than it is in most other neighbouring census divisions. Key economic sectors include agriculture and agri-food, construction and building, logistics and distribution, health care and administration services, and manufacturing. The town is the York Region's top agricultural producer, accounting for 32% of all agricultural production in the region.

All the growth and change in East Gwillimbury is leading to increasing demands on the Town's resources and its delivery of community events.

SWOT Analysis

A high-level analysis of EG's strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats (SWOT) as they relate to community events was completed to support the strategic planning process. The key findings from this analysis are provided next.

Strengths

- Existing event venues are well utilized.
- The new Health and Active Living Plaza provides much needed event hosting space.
- Established annual events are well organized and appreciated by residents.
- Strong participation at existing events.
- Community groups are engaged in special event provision.
- Unique communities/villages and diversity of green space/rural areas.
- Strong agricultural sector and heritage.
- Strong volunteer program in place (i.e. Engaged EG) which helps execute events.
- Existing staff and assets support successful events (e.g. Community Engagement and Special Event Coordinator, portable stage).
- A vibrant and diverse community.
- A strong commitment to IIDEA.
- Partnerships and strong relationships with diverse community organizations.

Weaknesses

- Need for improved internal coordination, processes, policies and role clarity for event delivery.
- Need for formal processes and policies related to event funding.
- Existing staff resources and funding are at capacity in terms of event delivery.
- Infrastructure limitations at existing event facilities, particularly in rural areas.
- Agricultural heritage appears to be underrepresented in the community's event offering.
- Marketing and promotion of events.
- Lack of indoor spaces that can accommodate large events.
- Currently, there is room to improve upon the amount of diversity reflected in Town-run event themes and focuses.

Opportunities

- Responding to growing event demand and growing diversity needs and interests as the population increases and diversifies.
- The distributed nature of communities in EG makes it challenging to host events in a way that is perceived as equitable for residents. There is an opportunity to address this through this plan.
- Further engagement of community groups in event provision.
- Expanding provision of free or low cost entertainment for residents through events.
- Differentiating offerings from surrounding communities.
- Considering events when planning and developing future community infrastructure.
- Evolving and strengthening existing events.
- Developing new events to engage seniors and youth.
- Clarifying roles, funding, and event supports.
- Enhancing event-related marketing.
- Integrating IIDEA (Indigeneity, Inclusion, Equity, Diversity and Accessibility) focus with community events.
- Community cohesion and celebrating diversity.

Threats

- Rapid population growth may put further strain on event services and infrastructure.
- Competing events in nearby municipalities.
- Inflationary increases to the cost of event production.
- Potential politicization of community events (e.g. protests).
- Risks associated with mass gatherings (e.g. terrorism, pandemics, uncontrolled crowds).
- Extreme weather challenges.
- Contributing to climate change through events that are not environmentally sustainable.
- Some events can carry significant economic and reputational risk.
- Not adapting to the increasing diversity of interests and needs of a growing population, particularly in regard to race, ethnicity, faith, and Indigeneity.

Event Offering Analysis

There are a variety of Town-run and externally delivered events in EG. These events take place throughout the year. Many Town-run events are focused on holiday seasons and public observances including New Years, Family Day, Easter, Canada Day, Halloween, Remembrance Day, and Christmas. The majority of Town-run events are single day events held at one of the Town's main hosting facilities such as the EG Sports Complex and Civic Centre. Existing events are much-loved and enjoyed by residents. In 2023, Town-run events drew over 26,000 attendees.¹³

The Town also leads community engagement initiatives and events such as Earth Day, National Indigenous History Month, Pride, Flag Raisings and Ceremonies, and Orange Shirt Day.

Spotlight on Music Nights

Music Nights is a much-loved multi-day event held each July. It features weekly free outdoor concerts at the East Gwillimbury Civic Centre, with local performers and premier tribute bands performing on the Town's portable stage. Attendees bring their own lawn chairs and can enjoy food and beverages from vendors on site. Over 1,000 people took part in Music Nights in 2024.¹⁴



Photo Credit: Expedition Management Consulting Ltd.

The following lists identify the main events in the community.

Town-Run Events

- Mayor and Council Pancake Breakfast and Skate
- Family Fun Day
- Easter Bunny Hike
- Farmers' Market
- Canada Day
- Music Nights
- Celebrating the Arts: A Taste of Culture
- Nature Day
- Haunted Halloween Hike
- Remembrance Day
- Santa Claus Parade, Holiday Market, and Tree Lighting
- Noon Years Eve

Town-led Community Initiatives and Events

- Earth Day
- National Indigenous History Month
- Pride
- Orange Shirt Day
- Flag Raisings and Ceremonies
- Volunteer Recognition

Externally Delivered Events

- Events marking cultural and/or religious holidays (e.g. Ramadan, Lunar New Year, Chanukah)
- Sporting events/tournaments (e.g. Mount Albert Sports Day)
- Health and wellness events (e.g. Health and Wellness Fair)
- History/heritage events (e.g. Anchored in History)
- Music concerts/festivals (e.g. Illumination: An Evening of Music)
- Gardening and nature talks (e.g. East Gwillimbury Gardeners)
- Family friendly community events (e.g. Park Parties)
- Food and agriculture events (e.g. Farm to Fork)
- Markets (e.g. Made by Me Market)

Spotlight on Santa Claus Parade

This annual event is a long-standing kick off to the holiday season and takes place in mid-November. The parade starts at the Civic Centre and ends at the Sports Complex. The Sports Complex is also where the Town's Holiday Market takes place on the same date, encouraging event attendees to stick around and purchase special gifts before the Tree Lighting and Free Skate begin later that evening. The parade alone drew 2,000 attendees in 2023.¹⁵

Spotlight on Celebrating the Arts: A Taste of Culture

This two day event aims to connect the community through arts, culture, food and heritage. In 2024, the event was attended by 1,500 people.¹⁶ It is held at the Civic Centre and features a main stage with a variety of local cultural and mainstream performers such as lion dancers, folk singers, DJs, rock bands and magicians. There is also a kid's zone with fun activities, a food and beverage zone with vendors, and an artisan and community market.



Photo Credits: Town of East Gwillimbury

Event Offerings in the Region

Municipalities and organizations from across the region host events throughout the year. Some of these events draw attendees from EG. Certain events are unique to a particular municipality, while others are similar to those delivered in EG and therefore could compete with them. Examples of this may include the Canada Day event and Farmers' Market hosted in Newmarket.

Event Venue and Asset Analysis

Events in the Town are hosted at outdoor and indoor facilities. Notable venues include the EG Sports Complex and the EG Civic Centre (both located in Sharon), and the Mount Albert Lions Community Centre. There are also several other community centres across the municipality that are used to host events, including River Drive Park Community Centre, Holland Landing Community Centre, Mount Albert Community Centre, Ross Family Complex, Harvest Hills Activity Centre and North Union Community Centre. The new Health and Active Living Plaza is currently under construction in Queensville and will feature an event street and pavilion as well as a diversity of recreational, arts, and cultural spaces. The Town also owns an impressive portable stage that it uses for Town-run events at a variety of locations. The Town also rents the stage out to support community-run events. More details on existing venues are in Appendix A.



Photo Credit: Town of East Gwillimbury

Infrastructure Gaps

There are several notable infrastructure gaps. These include a lack of purpose-built dedicated outdoor event venues and the resulting use of sports fields and parks spaces, which contributes to wear and tear and added maintenance costs at those facilities. Some venues also lack accessible outdoor pathways and there are limited parking and transit options. The overall lack of accessibility of event spaces is also a challenge. These gaps create barriers for attendees and limit the scale and types of events that can be accommodated in East Gwillimbury. There is also a lack of purpose-built indoor event venues, including facilities with fixed stages and seating such as performing arts spaces. This also limits the capacity for the community to expand existing events and deliver new ones, as does the current lack of a permanent outdoor stage.

New Infrastructure Plans

Ongoing and planned projects will improve the community's capacity to host events. Most notable among these is the construction of a new Health and Active Living Plaza (HALP) which will provide a strong mix of indoor and outdoor spaces to host events (see the next paragraph for an expanded discussion on the HALP). On a smaller scale, the Mount Albert Downtown Revitalization project will help support events by improving pedestrian accessibility and the public realm in that community, making it a more functional and attractive area for use by local businesses and organizations for event hosting. The Holland Landing Yonge Street Revitalization project will also result in similar streetscape and infrastructure improvements, and positive impacts on future local area events. Improvements to streetscape aesthetics and signage adjacent to the Civic Centre in Sharon will support positive on-the-ground experiences for event attendees. A new park in the Valleybrook subdivision (Silk Twist, under construction) includes a shade structure with benches, open play areas and accessible walkways, and will offer space for local residents to gather and host small events.

Health and Active Living Plaza

The HALP will be a game-changing facility for events, recreation, culture and the arts in East Gwillimbury. The multi-functional facility will include event space (event street and pavilion, approx. 14,000m²), an aquatics centre, library, maker space, gymnasium, program spaces, an interior boardwalk, outdoor cooking area and gardens, an outdoor playground, splash pad, skate park, pump track, and multiuse courts. The event space will include a dedicated stage and speakers. The building and site includes several green and environmentally friendly features such as electric vehicle charging stations, rainwater harvesting and energy recovery systems. The HALP is located in Queensville, a designated urban growth area and rapidly growing master planned community that will accommodate over 30,000 residents. The HALP is adjacent to the Town Centre. Construction is expected to be complete in 2025.



With 14,000m² of event space, the HALP will be a game-changing facility for events, recreation, culture and the arts in East Gwillimbury.

Figure 1. Health and Active Living Centre Site Plan





Farmers Market
Photo Credit: Town of East Gwillimbury

Service Delivery Model Analysis

Figure 2 describes the current role of the Town along a continuum of service delivery. Currently, the Town of EG's approach is best described as a combination of Direct Provider and Partner. The Town directly plans, produces, and delivers a mix of community events throughout the year. External organizations, such as local interest groups, businesses, and individuals also deliver events that add to the overall community event offering.

Figure 2. Service Delivery Spectrum



The Difference Between Town-Run and Community-Run Events

Town-run events are those that are planned, produced and delivered by Town staff.

Community-run events are those that are planned, produced and delivered by community organizations. These include events that the Town may support in some way, such as through providing funding, advice or logistical support to event organizers.

Event Delivery Landscape

Despite hosting many successful events, East Gwillimbury’s current event service delivery landscape is complex, with some overlapping roles and responsibilities.

Engaged EG Program

The Town-run Engaged EG program attracts up to 100 volunteers annually. They include teens, adults, seniors, and families with children. Volunteers support events in the community through a variety of roles such as greeting event attendees and working at activity specific booths. Town staff provide pre-event training and information sessions for volunteers, as well as on site event training.

Town of EG Events Staff

The Town employs two staff members to support event delivery. This includes a full time Community Engagement and Special Event Coordinator (1.0 FTE) and an Events Programmer (0.4 FTE). These positions are overseen by the Manager of Recreation, Community Engagement and Events (0.25 FTE allocated toward events). In total, the Town dedicates 1.65 FTE towards event delivery (see Figure 3).

Figure 3. Town Event Staff FTE Calculation

Position	FTE Allocation for Events
Manager of Recreation, Community Engagement, and Events	0.25
Community Engagement and Special Events Coordinator	1.00
Events Programmer	0.40
Total	1.65

The Community Engagement and Special Event Coordinator is responsible for planning and delivering the Town’s portfolio of community events. This includes managing the Engaged EG volunteer program and occasionally facilitating facility rentals from external groups. The Events Programmer is primarily responsible for promotion and operation of the Farmers’ Market event. The Manager of Recreation, Community Engagement, and Events supervises the events staff and contributes to event planning and delivery.

Staff from other departments also support events. For example, parks staff assist with event set up/ tear down and two staff members are needed to supervise the portable stage when it is in use. Communications staff advertise and promote event offerings to the community. Human Resources staff support Engaged EG volunteer training. Staff from other municipal departments that are impacted by events also contribute time and resources toward event delivery (e.g. Corporate Services, Legal and Legislative Services, Fire Services, Public Works, Development Services).

The scope and scale of Town-run events is straining Town staff and resources. Events with large operational impacts are causing service reductions in core functions (e.g. parks maintenance). At the present time, there is limited capacity to add new events or expand existing events.

Photo Credit: Greater Toronto Home Pros

Comparative Benchmarking Analysis

A comparative benchmarking analysis of communities similar to East Gwillimbury was conducted in order to provide a reference point for the current level of event service provision.

Communities were chosen as comparators if they met at least three of the following criteria:



The municipality has a similar event delivery structure and comparable program delivery in terms of the number and types of events.



The municipality's population was between 25,000 and 50,000 in 2021.



The municipality is located within 100km of the Greater Toronto Area.



The municipality includes both urban and rural areas.

The communities of Bradford West Gwillimbury, Georgina, and Whitchurch-Stouffville were chosen as comparators. Interviews were conducted with event staff from each comparator to collect information. Figure 4 provides a summary of comparative benchmarks. Key findings include:

- › EG offers a lower number of municipally run events to its comparators.
- › EG is below comparative benchmarks for municipal event staff. Town staff are delivering 10.3 events per FTE, whereas comparators are delivering 7.3 events per FTE on average. EG has 1 FTE per 20,992 residents, whereas comparators have 1 FTE per 13,819 residents.

Figure 4. Benchmarking Information

Municipality	East Gwillimbury	Comparator Average	Bradford West Gwillimbury	Georgina	Whitchurch-Stouffville
Population (2021)	34,637	46,795	42,880	47,642	49,864
Number of Events Delivered by Municipal Staff	17*	24.7	22	30	22
Municipal Event Staff (FTE) **	1.65	4.00	2.00***	4.35	5.50
Ratio of Staff to Events Delivered	1:10.3	1:7.3	1:1	1:6.9	1:4
Staff per 1,000 Residents	1:20,992	1:13,819	1:21,440	1:10,952	1:9,066

*In addition to these 17 events, Town staff also lead events such as park and trail openings, facility openings, special unplanned events throughout the year.

**FTE stands for Full Time Equivalent.

***BWG recently completed an Events Strategy that recommended adding additional human resources to the Town's events team. Therefore, it is expected that this number will increase.



Case Study: Alternative Approaches to Event Service Delivery

The communities of Orangeville, Centre Wellington, and Innisfil take a different approach to event service delivery. Their approaches are best described as a Facilitator. These municipalities directly deliver few (if any) events. Instead, municipal staff support community-led events primarily from an infrastructure standpoint (i.e. providing facilities and spaces to host events in). They also sometimes provide in-kind services and funding for community-led events (e.g. garbage collection, security, grant programs).

Strategic Alignment Analysis

A strategic alignment analysis was conducted to identify alignment between the concepts identified in this document and policy guidance used to plan other services, programs and infrastructure in the Town of EG. For an expanded discussion on the Town's relevant policy documents and direction, see Appendix B.

East Gwillimbury Strategic Plan (2022)

- Supports placemaking and community connection through events.

East Gwillimbury Official Plan (2023)

- Supports public gathering spaces and community destinations, as well as the development of facilities to meet the needs of residents and businesses.

Indigeneity, Inclusion, Equity, Diversity and Accessibility (IIDEA) Action Plan (2024-2027)

- Includes an initiative to advance the equitable celebration and recognition of IIDEA dates of significance through communications and events.

East Gwillimbury Multi-Year Accessibility Plan (MYAP) (2023-2027)

- Directs the review of the Town's event spaces and practices to identify areas of improvement related to accessibility and the removal of barriers for those in attendance.

Thinking Green, EG's Environmental Strategy (2024)

- Calls for development of a sustainable events policy.

East Gwillimbury Economic Development Strategy (2021)

- Facilitates strategic investment into event spaces to position the Town to secure a larger slice of Ontario's tourism industry.

Health and Active Living Master Plan (2018)

- Contains recommendations applicable to event development, such as developing policies and processes that promote special event expansion.

Town of East Gwillimbury Municipal Cultural Plan (2012)

- Contains goals and actions relevant to events, including creating a community calendar of events and expanding marketing and promotion to increase attendance at events.



Photo Credits: Town of East Gwillimbury

Summary of Community Engagement

Input from residents, community groups and advisory committees, local businesses and organizations, Town Council, and Town Staff was gathered from June 24 to August 30, 2024. Engagement activities included an online community survey, digital input workshops with residents, community groups and advisory committees, and Town staff, input workshops with Town Council, and interviews with event organizers. In total, the engagement process produced 620 touchpoints.

Key Findings

The following provides a summary of the key findings from the engagement process. To view the expanded engagement results, please see Appendix C.

- 72% of survey respondents “strongly agreed” or “agreed” that attending Town-events helps them feel connected to their community. This indicates a strong appreciation for community events in East Gwillimbury.
- Survey respondents expressed a high degree of satisfaction with how the Town is running events, including satisfaction with cleanliness of event spaces, safety, inclusion, and customer service.
- The main barriers to attending events reported by survey respondents included being unaware of events, the timing of events, and not being interested in the events offered.
- Respondents to the survey identified events meeting community needs, introducing new Town-run events, improving marketing and promotions, and expanding activities at existing events as the top areas of focus they would like to see for the strategy.
- In terms of the types of events East Gwillimbury should focus on in the future, respondents identified family-friendly events (63%), food and beverage events (45%), holiday/seasonal events (39%), and events related to the arts (35%) most often.
- In terms of the top opportunities for improvement, respondents identified advertising and communication, quality and variety of events, increasing the number of vendors at events, and more events catered towards seniors, adults, and teens.
- Event vendors and organizers identified events meeting community needs, improving marketing and promotions, introducing Town-run events, and practices that consider the environmental impacts of events as the top focus areas they would like to see for the strategy.
- When asked what assistance/resources would help them organize events, participants requested advertising and promotions, planning tools and guides, funding support, guidance and/or mentorship, and fee reduction/waivers.
- When asked what season to consider adding more events, participants identified fall (62%), winter (38%), spring (33%), and summer (33%) most often.

“

“The Halloween event was very memorable for my children this year!”

– Survey Respondent

“

“Include multicultural and nature education events”.

– Survey Respondent

“

“I always find out about Town events too late, so advertising around town more would be helpful”.

– Survey Respondent

“

“More vendors...and parking is not always available at the locations of bigger events.”

– Survey Respondent

“

“More funding to expand events and what they can offer.”

– Survey Respondent

Tourism Linkages

Local events that are enjoyed by East Gwillimbury residents can also attract visitors and support tourism, which can benefit the local economy. The community has much to offer and build on with respect to the types of experiences that many tourists are seeking. People are becoming more interested in rural heritage, close to home getaways and exposure to country lifestyles, leading to a growing demand for agritourism events.¹⁷ They are also becoming more interested in experiencing local life when travelling and are embracing unique, locally crafted, more sustainable, and higher quality products made at the host destination with local ingredients. Some of these products include farm to table offerings, craft beer, and events that show off authentic community values and spirit.¹⁸

East Gwillimbury's agricultural heritage, landscapes, and thriving food and agriculture businesses could be leveraged to develop new event offerings that meet such visitors needs and that boost tourism locally. The community is well positioned to attract visitors from surrounding urban regions. There are risks and challenges related to tourism however, and it is not always a great fit locally. These include overcrowding as more people visit and attend events, the commercialization of community events as their focus turns to revenue generation related to tourism, and local disappointment if the spirit and charm of events change. Should East Gwillimbury choose to link its event offerings with tourism, it should carefully manage these risks and opportunities to ensure that the wide ranging social and economic benefits of events are maintained.



Niemi Family Farm Christmas Market
Photo Credit: Town of East Gwillimbury

4

Vision and Outcomes

Photo Credit: Town of East Gwillimbury



Why Change?

Events are opportunities for connection. They have the power to forge bonds between people, communities and place. The potential of events to bring people together is already on display in East Gwillimbury. Thousands of people attend Town-run events and residents report a strong appreciation for event offerings.

The fast rate of population growth and rising event demand in the municipality present challenges that if not addressed could undermine the many benefits of events as well as the Town's ability to continue to deliver them successfully. The Town's organizational structure and capacity is insufficient to accommodate expanded event offerings or to fully support community organizations in local event delivery.

A more strategically designed and resourced event delivery system will ensure that the benefits of community events continue to be realized into the future as the town and its residents evolve. Developing such a system will require organizational and programming changes. This will involve examining resource requirements, adopting clear policies and criteria to make informed decisions about events, clarifying roles and responsibilities, developing programs and tools for community-run events, reimagining existing offerings, and supporting the delivery of events that are inclusive to everyone and distributed across the municipality's many communities.

Vision Statement

Events in East Gwillimbury bring residents and communities together to celebrate what they share and also what makes them unique.

Outcomes

- ✓ Events meet community-wide and community specific needs.
- ✓ Events are delivered within the financial and operational capacity of the Town.
- ✓ Community organizations are further engaged in delivering events.
- ✓ Community members are aware of and participate enthusiastically in events.
- ✓ Event facilities are well-programmed and animated, and can accommodate the community's event venue needs.
- ✓ Events are accessible and inclusive to all, welcoming newcomers and people of diverse cultures in the community.

5

Priorities

Photo Credit: Expedition Management Consulting Ltd.



This section describes the core priorities for the strategy, associated initiatives, and supporting recommendations. Initiatives were identified based on community engagement, input from Town Council and Administration, research, analysis, and consultant assessments. Some initiatives will take more time to accomplish than others, so the Town is encouraged to pursue multiple initiatives at the same time as resources allow. Please see Appendix G for an action plan that consolidates all the recommendations. Appendix G also includes several Key Performance Indicators in the areas of economic, social, and environmental.

Please see Appendix G for an action plan that consolidates all the recommendations and provides Key Performance Indicators.

Initiatives have been divided into two categories for organizational purposes (note that the numbering does not indicate priority). These categories include:

- 1. Organizational Development
- 2. Event and Program Development

Legend

Recommended Direction

 MAINTAIN	Continue using existing tools, processes, activities
 IMPROVE	Enhance existing tools, processes, activities
 INVEST	Add additional resources to tools, processes, activities
 EVALUATE	Further examine options for potential tools, processes, activities
 CREATE	Develop new tools, processes, activities

Preliminary Cost Estimate

Low	Less than \$10,000
Medium	\$10,000 - \$50,000
High	More than \$50,000
Staff Time	Action will require use of existing staff resources

Timeline

Short Term	1 to 2 years
Medium Term	3 to 5 years
Long Term	6 to 10 years
Ongoing	Will require continuing action

Organizational Development

- A. Establish a One Door In Approach and Clarify Roles
- B. Adopt Criteria to Evaluate Events
- C. Implement an Event Services Matrix
- D. Consider Adding Additional Human Resources to Support Events With A Phased-In Approach
- E. Establish a Special Events Advisory Team
- F. Clarify Council Advisory Committee Roles and Processes
- G. Enhance Volunteer Capacity
- H. Improve Evaluation and Reporting of Town-Run Events
- I. Ongoing and Future Planning

1. Organizational Development

A. Establish a One Door In Approach and Clarify Roles

The purpose of this initiative is to clear up uncertainties related to decision making and processes, improve administrative efficiencies and internal collaboration, and strengthen engagement with the people and groups involved in event planning and delivery. A ‘one-door-in’ approach, where there is a single point of contact at the Town for event related inquiries, is recommended to support these aims. Such an approach would streamline and improve communication with vendors, community groups, event sponsors, and other partners, and provide consistent information and supports to them. This in turn would support better event delivery. It would also provide internal clarity on related roles and responsibilities.

Additional tools that could be used to achieve role clarity include policies and procedures, process maps and updated job descriptions. New policies and procedures would confirm and formalize the event-related responsibilities of each Town department and assign roles to different staff positions or business areas for related tasks.



Recommended Direction



IMPROVE



MAINTAIN



Preliminary Cost Estimate

Low (staff time)



Timeline

Short



Recommendations

- 1.A.1 Establish a ‘one-door-in’ approach for events under which all event related requests sent to the Town are directed to a single point of contact.
- 1.A.2 Clarify internal roles and responsibilities, update job descriptions, and develop process maps for event development.
- 1.A.3 Formalize policies, procedures, and processes related to Town-run and community-run events.



Funding for Events

Town-run Events: Town funding is directed to the Parks, Recreation and Culture Department.

Town-led Community Engagement Initiatives and Events: Town funding is directed to the Communications and Customer Services, and People and Belonging Branches of the Corporate Services Department.

Externally Delivered Events: Requests for funding from the Town go through Town Council. Funding is otherwise by external groups/organizations.

Organizational Development

- A. Establish a One Door In Approach and Clarify Roles
- B. Adopt Criteria to Evaluate Events
- C. Implement an Event Services Matrix
- D. Consider Adding Additional Human Resources to Support Events With A Phased-In Approach
- E. Establish a Special Events Advisory Team
- F. Clarify Council Advisory Committee Roles and Processes
- G. Enhance Volunteer Capacity
- H. Improve Evaluation and Reporting of Town-Run Events
- I. Ongoing and Future Planning

B. Adopt Criteria to Evaluate Events

It is recommended that the Town adopts a set of criteria to help it evaluate its current portfolio of events and new event opportunities. The criteria will help inform decisions related to whether the Town should lead, partner, facilitate, or not participate in both existing and new event opportunities. Additionally, opportunities might arise through the evaluation process to improve efficiencies or establish partnerships for events, which could help reduce the impact on Town resources or maximize community benefits.

To assess events, the following questions should be considered:

- What is the service provided?
- Who benefits from the service?
- Why is this service necessary?
- How should it be delivered, and what is an appropriate cost?

Both existing events and any newly proposed ones should undergo this evaluation. A proposed set of criteria can be found in Appendix D.

 Recommended Direction	 Recommendation
 CREATE	
 EVALUATE	
 Preliminary Cost Estimate	
Low (staff time)	
 Timeline	
Short	1.B.1 Adopt a set of criteria to assist in determining which events merit investment by the Town.

Organizational Development

- A. Establish a One Door In Approach and Clarify Roles
- B. Adopt Criteria to Evaluate Events
- C. Implement an Event Services Matrix
- D. Consider Adding Additional Human Resources to Support Events With A Phased-In Approach
- E. Establish a Special Events Advisory Team
- F. Clarify Council Advisory Committee Roles and Processes
- G. Enhance Volunteer Capacity
- H. Improve Evaluation and Reporting of Town-Run Events
- I. Ongoing and Future Planning

C. Implement an Event Services Matrix

An event service matrix would provide clarity to the people and groups involved in event-delivery and Town staff. The matrix would be used by staff to determine what level of involvement and support is appropriate for the Town to provide for different types of event organizers. See Appendix E for a matrix for consideration.

 Recommended Direction	 Recommendations
 CREATE	1.C.1 Develop and implement an Event Services Matrix to assist the Town in determining what level of involvement and support the Town will provide for different types of event organizers.
 Preliminary Cost Estimate	
Low (staff time)	
 Timeline	
Short	

Organizational Development

- A. Establish a One Door In Approach and Clarify Roles
- B. Adopt Criteria to Evaluate Events
- C. Implement an Event Services Matrix
- D. Consider Adding Additional Human Resources to Support Events With A Phased-In Approach
- E. Establish a Special Events Advisory Team
- F. Clarify Council Advisory Committee Roles and Processes
- G. Enhance Volunteer Capacity
- H. Improve Evaluation and Reporting of Town-Run Events
- I. Ongoing and Future Planning

D. Consider Adding Additional Human Resources to Support Events With A Phased-In Approach

To continue delivering successful events, prepare for future growth, and enhance the sustainability of the community's event delivery system, it will be important for the Town to add additional human resources. This could be done through the establishment of new full or part time positions, by using contracted resources, or by re-allocating existing part-time staff when additional support is needed for large events. Any of these approaches could be phased in over time depending on the needs of the Town and available budget resources. Consideration should be given to adding priority staff in a financially sustainable way. Adding new positions would bring the Town's event staffing levels closer to those in comparator communities. Positions for consideration are described next. They are listed in order of suggested priority.

Event Programmer/Coordinator

The main role of this position would be to help the Town plan, execute, and evaluate events delivered by the municipality. They would have a tactical role to ensure that events run smoothly. This includes information sharing, risk management, problem solving, vendor and venue coordination, schedule management, on the ground oversight on event day, and gathering feedback and evaluating events. This position could also assist in providing a "one-door-in" approach by being the single point of contact at the Town for event development requests from the community. The addition of an event programming/coordinator resource would provide the following additional benefits.

- a. Provide increased capacity to successfully deliver the Town's current portfolio of events.
- b. Reduce the risk of service interruption if key event staff become unavailable.
- c. Enhance programming at existing Town-led events to better meet community needs.

Marketing and Revenue Development Coordinator

This position would primarily be responsible for developing and implementing impactful marketing plans for Town-run events. The specialist would manage the Town's event calendar, work with local partners to align event messaging and brand representation, and build relationships with local media outlets and influencers to generate expanded coverage for events in East Gwillimbury. The position would be responsible for securing non-municipal revenues to support event development, such as grants, sponsorships, and advertising. The position could also be given the task of marketing the Town's recreation and culture offerings if enhancements are needed there.

Organizational Development

- A. Establish a One Door In Approach and Clarify Roles
- B. Adopt Criteria to Evaluate Events
- C. Implement an Event Services Matrix
- D. Consider Adding Additional Human Resources to Support Events With A Phased-In Approach
- E. Establish a Special Events Advisory Team
- F. Clarify Council Advisory Committee Roles and Processes
- G. Enhance Volunteer Capacity
- H. Improve Evaluation and Reporting of Town-Run Events
- I. Ongoing and Future Planning

Event Engagement Coordinator

The primary purpose of this position would be to help community organizations develop and deliver their own events and attract new event producers to East Gwillimbury. The position would act in a consultative role with community organizations helping to build their capacity. It would be important for this position to build strong relationships with event partners both within the community and outside the community. It will play an important strategic role, ensuring the right partnerships are made at the right time so that the community is well positioned to respond to growing demand for events. If it were added to the Town’s event team, it would make sense to transfer responsibility for being the single point of contact to this position given the more external-facing nature of the role.

Evaluating Future Human Resource Needs

It will be important to ensure that event-related human resources evolve as East Gwillimbury’s population, diversity, and demand for events grows and changes over time. It is recommended that human resource needs be evaluated on an annual basis so that resources and needs remain aligned. Given that the events team is part of a broader recreation team under the Manager of Recreation, Community Engagement, and Events, supervision capacity should also be considered as event-related human resources change over time.



Recommended Direction

-  INVEST
-  EVALUATE



Preliminary Cost Estimate

High



Timeline

Short/Ongoing



Recommendations

- 1.D.1 Consider adding human resources with a phased-in approach to increase capacity of the Town and community to deliver events.
- 1.D.2 Evaluate human resource needs annually and adjust staff complement to respond to community needs.

Organizational Development

- A. Establish a One Door In Approach and Clarify Roles
- B. Adopt Criteria to Evaluate Events
- C. Implement an Event Services Matrix
- D. Consider Adding Additional Human Resources to Support Events With A Phased-In Approach
- E. Establish a Special Events Advisory Team
- F. Clarify Council Advisory Committee Roles and Processes
- G. Enhance Volunteer Capacity
- H. Improve Evaluation and Reporting of Town-Run Events
- I. Ongoing and Future Planning

E. Establish a Special Events Advisory Team

A Special Events Advisory Team (SEAT) would further improve role clarity, as well as internal collaboration. The purpose of a SEAT would be to review and prepare for upcoming events, and to review requests for large new events. A SEAT should be made up of a broad cross-section of municipal staff who are impacted by events and can help support them. Ideally, those with decision-making power and an understanding of the “nuts and bolts” of event delivery would be included (i.e. supervisors, mid-level managers). The SEAT could meet quarterly or bi-annually. A SEAT would complement instead of replicate the work of existing and future event staff, as well as Committees of Council.



Recommended Direction



CREATE



Recommendations

1.E.1 Establish a Special Events Advisory Team (SEAT).



Preliminary Cost Estimate

Staff time



Timeline

Short

Organizational Development

- A. Establish a One Door In Approach and Clarify Roles
- B. Adopt Criteria to Evaluate Events
- C. Implement an Event Services Matrix
- D. Consider Adding Additional Human Resources to Support Events With A Phased-In Approach
- E. Establish a Special Events Advisory Team
- F. Clarify Council Advisory Committee Roles and Processes
- G. Enhance Volunteer Capacity
- H. Improve Evaluation and Reporting of Town-Run Events
- I. Ongoing and Future Planning

F. Clarify Council Advisory Committee Roles and Processes

There is a need to clarify the roles and responsibilities of Council Advisory Committees, Community Groups of Council, and/or Working Groups of Council with respect to events. Clear processes for Committees would also help to support annual budgeting, event planning and coordination with Town staff across multiple business areas.



Recommended Direction

-  MAINTAIN
-  IMPROVE



Preliminary Cost Estimate

Staff time



Timeline

Short/Ongoing



Recommendations

- 1.F.1 Provide each Advisory Committee of Council with direction to:
 - a. Provide only advice to Council as to what events the Town should host each year well in advance of the budgeting process.
 - b. Prior to the reporting process, consult with the Parks, Recreation and Culture Department to make them aware of requests and seek feedback on potential event delivery dates/schedules, identify resource requests, and budget requirements.
 - c. Ensure the event request fits with the overall priorities and decision making criteria as identified in the Events Strategy.
 - d. Submit event requests to be considered for resourcing during the Town’s annual budgeting process.

Organizational Development

- A. Establish a One Door In Approach and Clarify Roles
- B. Adopt Criteria to Evaluate Events
- C. Implement an Event Services Matrix
- D. Consider Adding Additional Human Resources to Support Events With A Phased-In Approach
- E. Establish a Special Events Advisory Team
- F. Clarify Council Advisory Committee Roles and Processes
- G. Enhance Volunteer Capacity
- H. Improve Evaluation and Reporting of Town-Run Events
- I. Ongoing and Future Planning



Recommendations (continued)

- 1.F.2 Provide each Community Group of Council and/or Working Group of Council with direction to:
 - a. Consult with the Parks, Recreation and Culture Department to coordinate event delivery dates/schedules, identify any resource requests of the Town, and determine if the event request fits with the overall priorities and decision making criteria identified in the Events Strategy.
 - b. Report out annually with the budget process all events that will be held by the group for Council approval. Follow up with the Parks, Recreation and Culture Department after budget approval to schedule resources and event requirements.
- 1.F.3 In order to retain connection to the community in relation to arts and culture events moving forward, it is recommended the Arts and Culture Advisory Committee remain in-tact with a primary mandate of providing advice to Council and staff. Events should be led by Town staff unless Council determines that a specific event be led by the Committee. This aligns with the Health and Active Living Master Plan which identifies an Arts and Culture Advisory Committee as a key priority.



Community Groups and Working Groups of Council - Definition:

Community Groups and Working Groups of Council are established by Council to provide recommendations that foster community building through special events. These groups are granted access to Town spaces and resources to support their initiatives. Any updates to annual events or new event requests must be presented to Council for consideration during budget deliberations.

Organizational Development

- A. Establish a One Door In Approach and Clarify Roles
- B. Adopt Criteria to Evaluate Events
- C. Implement an Event Services Matrix
- D. Consider Adding Additional Human Resources to Support Events With A Phased-In Approach
- E. Establish a Special Events Advisory Team
- F. Clarify Council Advisory Committee Roles and Processes
- G. Enhance Volunteer Capacity
- H. Improve Evaluation and Reporting of Town-Run Events
- I. Ongoing and Future Planning

G. Enhance Volunteer Capacity

There is potential to build upon the success of the Engaged EG program to support events by increasing participation from adults, youth, newcomers and people of diverse backgrounds. Outreach and partnerships with local schools, senior centres, cultural associations and newcomer support organizations should be considered to increase the number and diversity of volunteers. Other considerations for increasing volunteer numbers and capacity include enhanced promotion of volunteer opportunities, developing new strategies to retain and engage existing volunteers, and providing incentives and recognition opportunities. Formal volunteer management tools such as software or apps would support Town staff in delivering an enhanced program.



Recommended Direction



IMPROVE



EVALUATE



Preliminary Cost Estimate

Medium (staff time)



Timeline

Short/Medium



Recommendations

- 1.G.1 Build on the Town’s existing Engaged EG volunteer program to improve the capacity of volunteers to support events, increase the diversity of volunteers, and to increase the number of volunteers at events.
- 1.G.2 Enhance and implement new strategies to retain and engage volunteers such as appreciation events, regular communication, rewards and training.
- 1.G.3 Consider using volunteer management software tools to help streamline volunteer coordination.

Organizational Development

- A. Establish a One Door In Approach and Clarify Roles
- B. Adopt Criteria to Evaluate Events
- C. Implement an Event Services Matrix
- D. Consider Adding Additional Human Resources to Support Events With A Phased-In Approach
- E. Establish a Special Events Advisory Team
- F. Clarify Council Advisory Committee Roles and Processes
- G. Enhance Volunteer Capacity
- H. Improve Evaluation and Reporting of Town-Run Events
- I. Ongoing and Future Planning

H. Improve Evaluation and Reporting of Town-Run Events

Evaluating existing events from social, economic and environmental perspectives will improve Town-run event delivery and help make the case for future investments in events. The results of such evaluations should be shared with Town Council, the community and partners. These results should be informed by feedback from participants (residents and performers), vendors, sponsors and organizers.



Recommended Direction



IMPROVE



Preliminary Cost Estimate

Medium (staff time)



Timeline

Short/Ongoing



Recommendations

- 1.H.1 Measure the social, economic, and environmental ROI of Town-run events. The attached performance measures, and other measures as appropriate, can be used to benchmark year to year performance.
- 1.H.2 Share ROI information with Town Council, management, senior administration, sponsors, and grant funding partners.
- 1.H.3 Conduct post-event surveys for Town-run events to collect data from participants including questions to gather feedback on opportunities for improvement.
- 1.H.4 Conduct a community-wide survey on a two- or three-year cycle to gauge overall resident satisfaction with Town-run events in East Gwillimbury.
- 1.H.5 Implement a measurement and reporting framework for all Town staff who contribute toward Town-run event planning and delivery so that the full amount of municipal human resource investment can be tracked.

Organizational Development

- A. Establish a One Door In Approach and Clarify Roles
- B. Adopt Criteria to Evaluate Events
- C. Implement an Event Services Matrix
- D. Consider Adding Additional Human Resources to Support Events With A Phased-In Approach
- E. Establish a Special Events Advisory Team
- F. Clarify Council Advisory Committee Roles and Processes
- G. Enhance Volunteer Capacity
- H. Improve Evaluation and Reporting of Town-Run Events
- I. Ongoing and Future Planning

I. Ongoing and Future Planning

The success of this strategy will require the Town to evaluate progress on and results of initiatives, and to formally review and update the strategy.



Recommended Direction



EVALUATE



IMPROVE



Preliminary Cost Estimate

Medium



Timeline

Medium



Recommendations

- 1.1.1 In year five of implementation, formally review and update the Events Strategy. Adjust as necessary and chart a course for the next 5 years.

Event and Program Development

- A. Enhance the Capacity of Community Organizations to Deliver Events
- B. Encourage More Small-scale Events at Parks Across East Gwillimbury
- C. Develop a Community Events Grant Program
- D. Enhance Event Marketing
- E. Enhance Diversity and Inclusion in Event Delivery
- F. Fully Leverage the Health and Active Living Plaza to Support Events
- G. Plan to Add New Outdoor Event Amenities in Parks
- H. Enhance and Evolve Existing Town-Run Events
- I. Develop New Events
- J. Support Vendor Participation in Town-Run Events
- K. Support Sustainable Event Delivery
- L. Consider Linkages to Tourism

2. Event and Program Development

A. Enhance the Capacity of Community Organizations to Deliver Events

Building the capacity of local organizations will advance the Town's goal of increasing community delivery of events. This will require removing barriers, developing processes, and providing resources that will assist community-run event organizers.

A clear process for planning and delivery of events by community organizations should be defined, including identifying what steps they need to take and what supports are available to them. Resources such as checklists, templates, and event delivery guides will also help build organizer capacity. Examples of these from other municipalities include the City of Markham's Special Event Guide and the City of Mission's Neighbourhood Small Grants Toolkit. Supporting event planning and delivery with such tools and making it easy to access them and other key information online will simplify and help provide structure to community-run event delivery. With these tools, more organizations will be able to deliver events, including those that showcase their unique cultures, and existing organizations can grow and enhance existing offerings. An annual community-run event forum would further engage and support community organizations by reporting on successes, describing upcoming initiatives, and providing opportunities for communication and collaboration in the events sector.



Case Study: *Markham Special Event Guide*

This guide is a comprehensive resource for event organizers. It provides information about the City's application processes, event venues, timelines, permits and approvals requirements, fees, and funding opportunities. It also contains an 'A-Z Guidelines' section that covers considerations and rules related to accessibility, diversity and inclusion, insurance, and potential event elements and amenities such as BBQs, alcohol and washrooms.

Event and Program Development

- A. Enhance the Capacity of Community Organizations to Deliver Events
- B. Encourage More Small-scale Events at Parks Across East Gwillimbury
- C. Develop a Community Events Grant Program
- D. Enhance Event Marketing
- E. Enhance Diversity and Inclusion in Event Delivery
- F. Fully Leverage the Health and Active Living Plaza to Support Events
- G. Plan to Add New Outdoor Event Amenities in Parks
- H. Enhance and Evolve Existing Town-Run Events
- I. Develop New Events
- J. Support Vendor Participation in Town-Run Events
- K. Support Sustainable Event Delivery
- L. Consider Linkages to Tourism



Recommended Direction



IMPROVE



CREATE



Preliminary Cost Estimate

Low/Medium



Timeline

Short



Recommendations

- 2.A.1 Develop and communicate a clear process for planning and delivery of community-run events.
- 2.A.2 Improve information available online for event organizers including information about permits, licenses, approval requirements, funding opportunities, and related policies and procedures.
- 2.A.3 Develop resources that community organizations can use to plan and promote their events such as checklists, templates, and resource guides.
- 2.A.4 Identify ways to reduce barriers for community groups to host events, including examining fees, permitting, marketing, and funding.
- 2.A.5 Consider offering facility rental fee waivers or discounts to incentivize event development from the community.
- 2.A.6 Host an annual Community-Run Event Forum.



Case Study: *City of Mission's Neighbourhood Small Grants Toolkit*

This toolkit is aimed at groups organizing neighbourhood level events. It is concise at only 12 pages long and outlines: steps for organizing events, how to apply for an event grant, a planning checklist, ideas for activities, and important rules and considerations.

Event and Program Development

- A. Enhance the Capacity of Community Organizations to Deliver Events
- B. Encourage More Small-scale Events at Parks Across East Gwillimbury
- C. Develop a Community Events Grant Program
- D. Enhance Event Marketing
- E. Enhance Diversity and Inclusion in Event Delivery
- F. Fully Leverage the Health and Active Living Plaza to Support Events
- G. Plan to Add New Outdoor Event Amenities in Parks
- H. Enhance and Evolve Existing Town-Run Events
- I. Develop New Events
- J. Support Vendor Participation in Town-Run Events
- K. Support Sustainable Event Delivery
- L. Consider Linkages to Tourism

B. Encourage More Small-scale Events at Parks Across East Gwillimbury

To respond to population growth and equitably meet the changing needs of residents it will be important for the Town to support access to events and event delivery across all its communities. This could entail spreading out events geographically (i.e. by utilizing multiple locations) and over time (i.e. by running an event over multiple weekends during a month). This can serve to reduce or mitigate the challenges associated with organizing and delivering large-scale Town-run events that happen over the course of only one or two days. It can also extend the timeframe over which audiences can enjoy events. The Town is already successfully doing this with Music Nights and the Farmers Market. Additional distribution will help to spread event programming more broadly across the Town's wards. It is important to note that not all Town-run events would be good candidates for decentralized event delivery (e.g. Canada Day).

The Town can also encourage the distribution of community-run events. There are several tools that have been successful in other municipalities, including event resource kits such as Okotoks' Rock Your Block Party Trailer and Surrey's Neighbourhood Event Kit. These tools remove key financial and logistical barriers for communities to host their own events at local parks spaces. Resource kits help with set up and programming, and can include games, tables, chairs, tents and other items.



Case Study: Okotoks Rock Your Block Party Trailer

This Town-owned 16ft trailer houses toys and games, tables and chairs, a BBQ and a portable speaker. It is reservable online for neighbourhood events within town limits. Users pick it up from the recreation centre, provide their own propane tank for the BBQ, clean the trailer's items after use, and drop it back off later in the day. City staff are responsible for signing the trailer out when it is picked up and doing a walk-through when it is returned. The Town also has a Block Party Planning Checklist and Planning Committee To-Do Checklist.

Event and Program Development

- A. Enhance the Capacity of Community Organizations to Deliver Events
- B. Encourage More Small-scale Events at Parks Across East Gwillimbury
- C. Develop a Community Events Grant Program
- D. Enhance Event Marketing
- E. Enhance Diversity and Inclusion in Event Delivery
- F. Fully Leverage the Health and Active Living Plaza to Support Events
- G. Plan to Add New Outdoor Event Amenities in Parks
- H. Enhance and Evolve Existing Town-Run Events
- I. Develop New Events
- J. Support Vendor Participation in Town-Run Events
- K. Support Sustainable Event Delivery
- L. Consider Linkages to Tourism



Recommended Direction



CREATE



IMPROVE



Preliminary Cost Estimate

Low-High



Timeline

Medium



Recommendations

- 2.B.1 Consider using additional distributed approaches for Town-run events.
- 2.B.2 Develop tools for residents and organizations to plan and deliver events in their communities. Consider creating a 'Block Party in a Box' that includes games, BBQs and other resources for fun and easy event programming.



Case Study: Surrey Neighbourhood Event Kits

Kits are available for community celebrations and events. Each contains a portable sound system, two pop-up canopy tents, two folding tables, and assorted lawn games. They can be requested through an online form, and borrowers use their recreation passes to 'check out' the kits from six different locations across the city.

Event and Program Development

- A. Enhance the Capacity of Community Organizations to Deliver Events
- B. Encourage More Small-scale Events at Parks Across East Gwillimbury
- C. Develop a Community Events Grant Program
- D. Enhance Event Marketing
- E. Enhance Diversity and Inclusion in Event Delivery
- F. Fully Leverage the Health and Active Living Plaza to Support Events
- G. Plan to Add New Outdoor Event Amenities in Parks
- H. Enhance and Evolve Existing Town-Run Events
- I. Develop New Events
- J. Support Vendor Participation in Town-Run Events
- K. Support Sustainable Event Delivery
- L. Consider Linkages to Tourism

C. Develop a Community Events Grant Program

Developing a community events grant program will help to set expectations and improve clarity and transparency in the allocation of funding to community organizations. It will also improve administrative efficiencies and alignment of funds with this strategy and Town priorities. Grants help community organizations cover event hosting expenses such as advertising, equipment, entertainment, and food.

It is common for grants to be matching funds, with community organizations contributing cash or in kind services. They can range from \$300 mini-grants to \$5,000 and above per event, depending on the resources of the municipality and the goals of their respective programs. The Town of East Gwillimbury can determine the total amount of annually available grant funds, and the maximum amount of individual grants based on the needs of local organizations, the goals of this strategy, and what is within the municipality’s financial means.

Formal policies and procedures for grants will ensure that everyone understands what funds are available, how they are allocated, and who has decision making authority. Predictable processes including established timelines/grant cycles, application requirements, guidelines and assessment criteria, and approval processes will help community organizations who apply and Town event staff who administer the program. Grant policies should also define what constitutes a ‘community-run event’ and include allocation criteria to equitably distribute grants across all Town wards. It is envisioned that with a grant program in place most one-off requests to Town Council for event funding would no longer be necessary. New event related policies could outline under what circumstances requests for special funding for major events that fall outside the parameters of the community event grant program could be advanced to Council for consideration.



Recommended Direction



CREATE



Preliminary Cost Estimate

Medium



Timeline

Short



Recommendations

2.C.1 Develop a Community Events Grant Program and identify potential funding sources to support it.

Event and Program Development

- A. Enhance the Capacity of Community Organizations to Deliver Events
- B. Encourage More Small-scale Events at Parks Across East Gwillimbury
- C. Develop a Community Events Grant Program
- D. Enhance Event Marketing
- E. Enhance Diversity and Inclusion in Event Delivery
- F. Fully Leverage the Health and Active Living Plaza to Support Events
- G. Plan to Add New Outdoor Event Amenities in Parks
- H. Enhance and Evolve Existing Town-Run Events
- I. Develop New Events
- J. Support Vendor Participation in Town-Run Events
- K. Support Sustainable Event Delivery
- L. Consider Linkages to Tourism



Case Study: Mission Neighbourhood Small Grants, Special Events Grant and Community Event Grant

Three funding streams provide grants for different scales and categories of local events. The Neighbourhood Small Grant stream provides \$500 grants to support neighbourhood driven initiatives including block parties. The Community Event Grant stream supports recurring events that Council has pre-determined provide a significant benefit to the community as a whole. Typically there is a \$5,000/year limit on these grants. Special Event Grants support one-time events that are of a cultural, social or recreational significance to the community, and that are also open to all members of the public without charge. Mission's grants policy allows City staff to make decisions for small grants and directs Council to make decisions on larger ones. Applications for special event and community event grants are assessed by a grant jury using a scoring system. The jury's recommendations are presented to Council for final approval.



Case Study: Burnaby Festivals Grant

Provides funding for up to 40% of eligible expenses, up to a maximum of \$4,000, to support new small scale festivals delivered by local registered non-profit community organizations. The program also provides funding for medium and large scale events that have been produced by a community organization at least one time. The maximum amount of funding for these scales of festivals is \$12,000 and \$25,000 respectively.



Case Study: Waterloo Neighbourhood Grant

Provides several streams of grant funding, including \$300 'mini-grants' for small neighbourhood events/activities and up to \$7,500 for neighbourhood based initiatives (including events) that are primarily resident-led and delivered, aimed at community-building, enhancing sense of belonging, and that are equitable, accessible and inclusive. Applying for mini grants involves emailing City staff with key details (who, what, where, when, why, and how in a few sentences). Review of applications for larger grants involves review by a Neighbourhood Grants Committee.

Event and Program Development

- A. Enhance the Capacity of Community Organizations to Deliver Events
- B. Encourage More Small-scale Events at Parks Across East Gwillimbury
- C. Develop a Community Events Grant Program
- D. Enhance Event Marketing
- E. Enhance Diversity and Inclusion in Event Delivery
- F. Fully Leverage the Health and Active Living Plaza to Support Events
- G. Plan to Add New Outdoor Event Amenities in Parks
- H. Enhance and Evolve Existing Town-Run Events
- I. Develop New Events
- J. Support Vendor Participation in Town-Run Events
- K. Support Sustainable Event Delivery
- L. Consider Linkages to Tourism

D. Enhance Event Marketing

Expanded promotional activities for Town-run events would help to drive resident and sponsor interest, support event vendors, and drive event attendance. Tools could include annual marketing plans, dedicated social media accounts, and/or the development of an event specific app. Other tools to consider include leveraging user generated content (i.e. event attendees posting online about their experiences), earned media, and familiarization activities for influencers. Traditional marketing (e.g. posters and advertising in print media), outreach to community organizations and groups, and inclusive language would also help to reach more of the community. Incorporating storytelling and additional photos, graphics, videos, narration and people into event marketing will help to promote events based on the experiences that attendees can expect and look forward to. The Town of Aurora is an example of a municipality that incorporates these into its event marketing activities. Each of actions could be further enhanced through the introduction of a dedicated Events Marketing and Revenue position.



Recommended Direction



IMPROVE



Preliminary Cost Estimate

Low-Medium



Timeline

Short/Ongoing



Recommendations

- 2.D.1 Phase in an Events Marketing and Revenue position with a focus on revenue generation as an off-set to the operating costs for the position.
- 2.D.2 Develop an annual marketing plan for Town-run events.
- 2.D.3 Consider creating marketing and communication channels specifically for events.
- 2.D.4 Promote vendors and sponsors as part of event marketing activities.

Event and Program Development

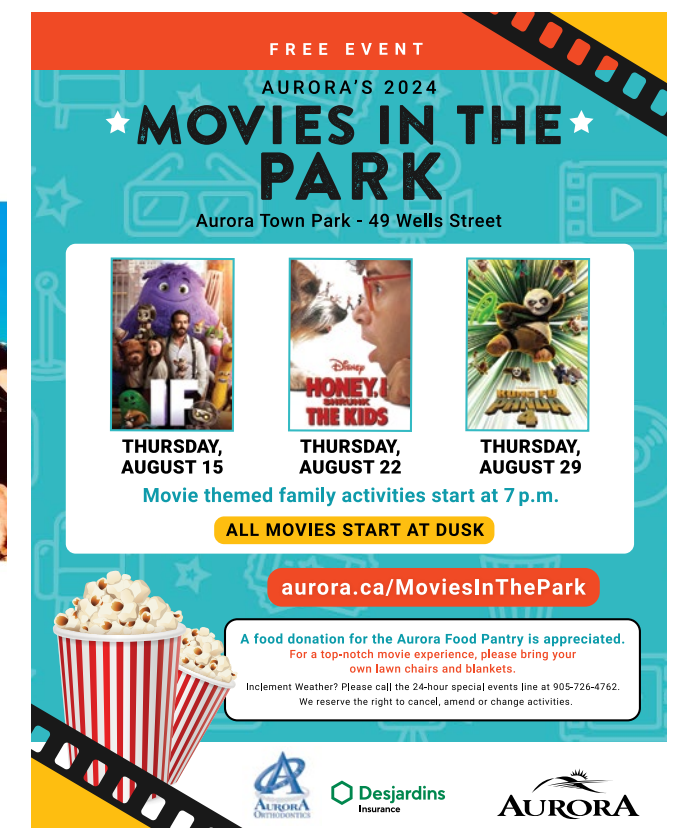
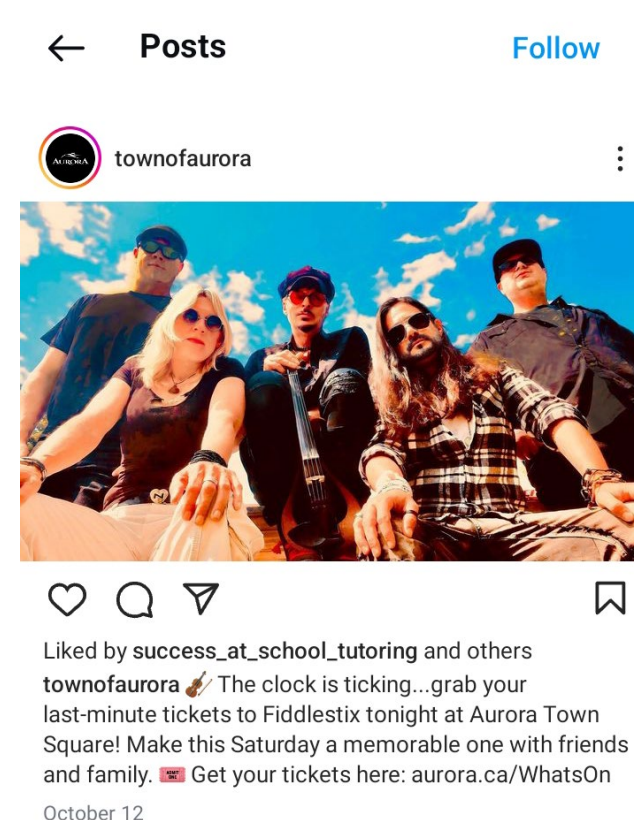
- A. Enhance the Capacity of Community Organizations to Deliver Events
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Case Study: Town of Aurora Event Marketing

The Town of Aurora delivers Town-run events and supports community-run events. It supports the marketing of both through a variety of channels. Its website hosts a page dedicated to special events, with subpages for individual events. Sub-pages include high quality images (e.g. photos and graphics) and engaging event descriptions. They also highlight key information such as dates and times, locations, registration requirements, costs and accessibility considerations.

The municipality also develops attractively designed flyers/posters for many events and uses its social media pages to market events before, during and after they are delivered. It creates captivating content including reels, stories and posts, and uses photographs and video footage with high production value. It also uses storytelling on social media to drive interest in events. For example, it features performers describing their upcoming shows, video narration, background sounds and music, and imagery from previous years to capture the atmosphere of an event. Together these paint a picture of the experiences that people will have when they attend.



Event and Program Development

- A. Enhance the Capacity of Community Organizations to Deliver Events
- B. Encourage More Small-scale Events at Parks Across East Gwillimbury
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- E. Enhance Diversity and Inclusion in Event Delivery
- F. Fully Leverage the Health and Active Living Plaza to Support Events
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- K. Support Sustainable Event Delivery
- L. Consider Linkages to Tourism

E. Enhance Diversity and Inclusion in Event Delivery

East Gwillimbury is rapidly becoming more diverse. This trend is expected to continue as the population more than doubles in the coming decades. To meet the needs of residents it will be important to deliver Town-run events and to encourage community-run events that are inclusive. Inclusive events are those that are open, welcoming, and accessible to everyone, and that have a broad-based appeal. Events that are planned and delivered with diversity and inclusion in mind will help new and existing residents become involved in the community and promote feelings of safety and belonging for attendees.



Inclusive events are those that are open, welcoming and accessible to everyone, and that have a broad-based appeal.

Diversity and inclusion can be considered across the spectrum of the Town's event related activities, including planning, promotion, and delivery of Town-run events, as well as the development and use of tools and programs to support community-run events. This could involve creating resources in multiple languages, using simple, bias-free language in event related materials and marketing, and providing information about event and event venue accessibility. This would align with the Town's IIDEA Action Plan which directs the development of a guide for creating accessible events (initiative 6.02). That plan also supports 2SLGBTQIA+ friendly physical spaces in EG (initiative 5.01).

Partnerships and supports could also help people of diverse identities and backgrounds participate in event related committees, working groups and volunteer opportunities. Diversity and inclusion considerations could also be incorporated into the Town's event evaluation criteria and event evaluation activities.

Event and Program Development

- A. Enhance the Capacity of Community Organizations to Deliver Events
- B. Encourage More Small-scale Events at Parks Across East Gwillimbury
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Recommended Direction

 **IMPROVE**



Preliminary Cost Estimate

Low



Timeline

Short/Ongoing



Recommendations

- 2.E.1 Encourage representation from people of diverse backgrounds on event-related committees and working groups.
- 2.E.2 Look for ways to align event delivery with the Town’s Indigeneity, Inclusion, Diversity, Equity and Accessibility Action Plan.
- 2.E.3 Create a guide for staff and community members who organize events, including accessibility of event spaces, communications, registration, flyer design, social media posts, and other relevant components.
- 2.E.4 Encourage community organizations to deliver open and welcoming community-run events that showcase and share cultural traditions with all East Gwillimbury residents.
- 2.E.5 Partner with local organizations and cultural groups, such as the Georgina Island First Nation and Black Community Organizations, to attract and retain volunteers with diverse backgrounds and to ensure volunteer programs are inclusive and accessible to all residents.
- 2.E.6 Engage staff and residents on IIDEA dates of significance such as National Indigenous Peoples Day, Pride Month, Black History Month, Newcomer Welcome Week, and Asian History Month.

Event and Program Development

- A. Enhance the Capacity of Community Organizations to Deliver Events
- B. Encourage More Small-scale Events at Parks Across East Gwillimbury
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- D. Enhance Event Marketing
- E. Enhance Diversity and Inclusion in Event Delivery
- F. Fully Leverage the Health and Active Living Plaza to Support Events
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F. Fully Leverage the Health and Active Living Plaza to Support Events

Fully realizing the event potential of the HALP will require considering and answering strategic questions about how the facility will deliver great event experiences. A special event plan for the HALP would identify ways to ensure that the facility thrives as an event venue. A special event plan would answer key questions such as ‘who is your target market for events?’, ‘how will space for events be allocated?’, ‘how will recreational and cultural programs offered at HALP complement events?’, ‘how will event hosting and sport tourism event requests be managed?’, and ‘what revenues and expenses can be expected from event hosting activities?’.

An animation plan for the HALP would complement a special event plan and help to ensure that events contribute to drawing people to the facility and engaging them with it. Such a plan would guide the creation of events, spaces and programs within the HALP (as well as on its grounds and on the event street) to provide a unique atmosphere and entertainment possibilities that are of interest to residents, eventgoers, event sponsors, vendors, and organizers. Animated spaces at the HALP would provide an interesting setting for visitors to interact and connect with each other. Shared experiences foster social bonds and would help to create a sense of community within the facility. In turn, this would contribute to a positive and inclusive atmosphere, encouraging visitors and organizers to return and make the HALP a preferred gathering and hosting place.



Facility Animation

Animation enhances experiences and engagement by creating immersive environments, fostering emotional connections, encouraging active participation, catering to diverse audiences, and boosting social interaction. It goes beyond adding visual appeal and can consist of small-scale performances, interactive displays, and thoughtfully designed programming, all aimed at enlivening people’s experience within your facility.



Recommended Direction



IMPROVE



CREATE



Preliminary Cost Estimate

Medium/High



Timeline

Short



Recommendations

- 2.F.1 Develop a Special Event Plan for the HALP.
- 2.F.2 Develop an Animation Plan for the HALP.
- 2.F.3 Support events that focus on Health and Active Living opportunities.
- 2.F.4 Expand partnership programming and events with the Health and Active Living Plaza Partners.

Event and Program Development

- A. Enhance the Capacity of Community Organizations to Deliver Events
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- L. Consider Linkages to Tourism

G. Plan to Add New Outdoor Event Amenities in Parks

It will be important for East Gwillimbury to continue investing in event hosting infrastructure as it grows. It will similarly be important to invest across all communities, to make sure they are well served as they become home to more residents and a greater diversity of resident needs. Planning new parks and outdoor spaces with events in mind will position them to be great hosting venues. Amenities to consider include accessible walkways, washrooms, electrical hook-ups, sewer and water connections, seating and shade structures. These types of upgrades at existing parks will help create more event hosting capacity. They will also position the community’s green spaces to better serve residents who use and enjoy them on a regular basis. This in turn can strengthen the case for investing in parks. In master-planned communities the Town can work with developers to build new park spaces that include amenities for events from the beginning. Criteria to evaluate the proposed location of new lands for events would further help the Town to strategically plan for spaces that will best serve the needs of the community and municipality.



Recommended Direction



IMPROVE



INVEST



Preliminary Cost Estimate

Medium/High



Timeline

Short/Ongoing



Recommendations

- 2.G.1 Consider future event needs and facilities in municipal planning (land use, facility design, transportation infrastructure, service level decisions).
- 2.G.2 Work with developers during the planning and construction stages of new neighbourhoods and communities to ensure parks have amenities that support events (e.g. washrooms, electrical hook ups, pathways, seating areas, and shade structures).
- 2.G.3 Incorporate climate and extreme weather risk management into the design of event hosting facilities.
- 2.G.4 Continue collaboration between the Town’s parks and events teams to incorporate event supporting infrastructure into park improvement and construction projects.
- 2.G.5 Adopt a set of criteria for acquiring new land for event spaces. See Appendix F.

Event and Program Development

- A. Enhance the Capacity of Community Organizations to Deliver Events
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- L. Consider Linkages to Tourism

H. Enhance and Evolve Existing Town-Run Events

Reviewing and evolving existing Town-run events will help to ensure they remain well loved and well attended, and that they are responsive to changing resident needs. Events that meet local needs will help build connections between community members, build resident pride in East Gwillimbury, and encourage people to participate in civic life and remain in the community through different life stages. The Town should look for opportunities to experiment with combining or re-imagining existing events to strengthen them for all involved. For example, combining Music Nights and the Farmers Market could complement the offerings of each event, retain and attract new vendors to the Farmers Market, attract new attendees, and maximize use of the Town’s related event planning resources. It could also look for opportunities to further differentiate Town-run events from similar events in surrounding communities, and to work with regional partners to ensure that events in East Gwillimbury are unique and complementary to regional offerings.

	Recommended Direction		Recommendations
	IMPROVE		
	EVALUATE		
	Preliminary Cost Estimate		
	Low/Medium		
	Timeline		
	Short/Ongoing		
			2.H.1 Consider a pilot to combine Music Nights and the Farmers Market.
			2.H.2 Set a goal to renew a certain percentage of event-related programming each year to ensure community events continue to excite and delight participants.
			2.H.3 Explore opportunities to enhance programming/activities at events that cater towards youth interests.
			2.H.4 Review existing events to consider how they can be made more accessible and inclusive.
			2.H.5 Consider engaging with other municipalities in the region to align municipally-run event offerings and maximize local participation.

Event and Program Development

- A. Enhance the Capacity of Community Organizations to Deliver Events
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- E. Enhance Diversity and Inclusion in Event Delivery
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- L. Consider Linkages to Tourism

I. Develop New Events

Developing new events that reflect the character and demographics of the community will help to keep residents, vendors, and sponsors interested in participating and excited about event offerings. Assuming adequate resources are put in place, and as the community grows, there may be opportunities to diversify event offerings and to attract new sponsors by partnering and building on existing events run by local organizations. One option might be to collaborate with the Central York Chamber of Commerce to build on their annual self-guided EG Farm to Fork Tour, supporting enhanced programming at local farms, helping to connect more residents to more local farmers and to build a signature event that celebrates the agricultural heritage of East Gwillimbury. The types of events that were identified as being most in demand through the engagement process for the strategy include family-friendly events, food and beverage events, holiday/seasonal events, and events related to the arts.

 Recommended Direction	 Recommendations
 CREATE	
 Preliminary Cost Estimate	
Low-Medium	
 Timeline	
Medium	
	2.1.1 Consider creating a new event that reflects the agricultural heritage of East Gwillimbury and the ongoing rural character of many of its communities.
	2.1.2 Develop plans to introduce new events that respond to resident demand, particularly for demographics that may be underserved such as youth/teens and seniors.
	2.1.3 Consider new events that support and reflect the interests and needs of marginalized and equity-deserving groups, including Indigenous, Black, racialized persons, the 2SLGBTQIA+ community, disabled persons/persons with disabilities, and minoritized faith groups.
	2.1.4 Integrate IIDEA Action Plan initiatives into the creation of new events.

Event and Program Development

- A. Enhance the Capacity of Community Organizations to Deliver Events
- B. Encourage More Small-scale Events at Parks Across East Gwillimbury
- C. Develop a Community Events Grant Program
- D. Enhance Event Marketing
- E. Enhance Diversity and Inclusion in Event Delivery
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- K. Support Sustainable Event Delivery
- L. Consider Linkages to Tourism

J. Support Vendor Participation in Town-Run Events

To continue to deliver successful events and to evolve and expand event offerings in the community, it will be important to supporting existing vendors and attract new ones. This includes reducing barriers for vendors and making sure Town-run events are designed to drive participants to them. Potential barriers to investigate include event design, availability of information, infrastructure/amenity needs, fees, and permitting and approvals processes and timelines. Richmond Hill has developed an excellent online resource for vendors that could be built on by the Town.



Recommended Direction



IMPROVE



Preliminary Cost Estimate

Low



Timeline

Short/Ongoing



Recommendations

- 2.J.1 Prioritize support for local area vendors and identify ways to reduce barriers for vendors to participate in events.
- 2.J.2 Involve potential vendors in the early stages of planning for new and existing events to ensure their operational and business needs, and the needs of their customers, are met.
- 2.J.3 Integrate IIDEA Action Plan initiatives as it relates to supporting vendor participation.



Case Study: Richmond Hill Vendor Application Page

The City of Richmond Hill has a well organized webpage dedicated to supporting event vendors. It provides step by step instructions and information about fees, insurance requirements, who to contact, and City-run events for vendors to participate in. It also includes an online vendor application form.

Event and Program Development

- A. Enhance the Capacity of Community Organizations to Deliver Events
- B. Encourage More Small-scale Events at Parks Across East Gwillimbury
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- L. Consider Linkages to Tourism

K. Support Sustainable Event Delivery

Consideration for sustainable event delivery will help to maximize benefits and minimize social, financial and environmental impacts of events.



Recommended Direction



MAINTAIN



CREATE



Preliminary Cost Estimate

Low



Timeline

Short/Medium



Recommendations

- 2.K.1 Implement the Town’s forthcoming Sustainable Event Strategy as events are planned and delivered.
- 2.K.2 Develop criteria to ensure that events are directed to/held in facilities that can adequately accommodate them to limit inappropriate use or excessive wear and tear on municipal infrastructure.
- 2.K.3 Implement the Event Sponsorship Policy.

Event and Program Development

- A. Enhance the Capacity of Community Organizations to Deliver Events
- B. Encourage More Small-scale Events at Parks Across East Gwillimbury
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L. Consider Linkages to Tourism

Leveraging events to support tourism in East Gwillimbury have the potential to benefit the local economy. The community’s agricultural roots and mix of rural and urban areas could be built on to help meet visitor market demand for culinary experiences and agritourism. Other assets that could be leveraged for tourism growth include the Central York Chamber of Commerce’s annual self-guided farm to fork tour, its Experience East Gwillimbury webpage, the York Region Arts Council’s Experience York Region webpage, privately owned facilities such as the Barn Event Space at Brooks Farms, and the Holland Marsh Growers Association.



Recommended Direction

 **EVALUATE**



Preliminary Cost Estimate

Low



Timeline

Medium



Recommendations

- 2.L.1 Consider working with local organizations and businesses to explore the development of tourism related events that build on the agricultural heritage of East Gwillimbury.
- 2.L.2 Consider the tourism potential of existing Town-run events and identify ways to enhance their appeal to visitors.
- 2.L.3 Consider engaging with regional organizations to identify ways to leverage existing assets and work together to develop and market events.
- 2.L.4 Encourage event producers and local tourism businesses and organizations to develop pre/during/post event experience packages to entice eventgoers to stay longer, do more, and spend more in East Gwillimbury.
- 2.L.5 Consider providing resources and supports to encourage residents to host their friends and family during events (e.g. trip planning tools, ambassador programs, VFR packages, how-to-host tip sheets).
- 2.L.6 Encourage businesses to offer promotions and incentives to eventgoers in order to draw visitors into the community and multiply their impact.
- 2.L.7 Considering ways that IIDEA initiatives and focuses can increase and encourage tourism.

6

Top 10 Actions and Roles in Implementation



Top 10 Actions

The following actions have been identified as top priorities. They are activities with the most potential to advance the vision and outcomes of this events strategy. It is expected that the Town would implement them as resources allow. They are listed in a recommended order of priority.

- 

1.

Establish a ‘one-door-in’ approach for events at the Town and clarify internal roles and responsibilities related to event delivery.
- 

2.

Adopt a set of criteria to assist in determining which events merit investment by the Town.
- 

3.

Implement an event services matrix to assist the Town in determining what level of involvement and support the Town will provide to different types of event organizers.
- 

4.

Consider adding human resources to increase capacity of the Town and community to deliver events, using a priority focused and phased-in approach.
- 

5.

Establish a Special Events Advisory Team (SEAT).
- 

6.

Develop a community events grant program.
- 

7.

Encourage more small-scale events at parks across East Gwillimbury through program elements like “Block Party in a Box” and outdoor facility enhancements.
- 

8.

Develop a Special Event Plan for the HALP.
- 

9.

Enhance diversity and inclusion in event delivery including integration of IIDEA Action Plan projects and initiatives.
- 

10.

Implement the Town’s forthcoming Sustainable Event Strategy as events are planned and delivered.

Partner Roles and Responsibilities

The implementation of this strategy will require the cultivation of partnerships to collaboratively accomplish initiatives. The following identifies key partners for the strategy and describes their role.

Organization	Role
Town Council	Adopt new bylaws, policies and procedures required to advance the strategy’s initiatives. Consider resource requests during annual budget process.
Town Administration	Led by the Parks, Recreation and Culture Department, work collaboratively to implement action items identified in the strategy.
Council Advisory Committees	Provide advice to Council and Administration relating to community events.
Working Groups	Support implementation by delivering events in alignment with this strategy.
Community Organizations	Support implementation by delivering community-run events in alignment with this strategy.
Businesses	- Providing front-line services to eventgoers and highly engaging experiences during events. - Participate in event sponsorship opportunities.
Residents	Residents should be encouraged to participate in Working Groups, event-specific planning committees, and event-day volunteering through the Engaged EG program.
Central York Chamber of Commerce	The Chamber is a key link to the business community. The Chamber should connect with businesses in the community and encourage involvement, which would benefit businesses.

7

Conclusion





Photo Credit: Mount Albert Sports Day and Spring Fair Facebook

Conclusion

The Events Strategy outlines a clear roadmap for the Town of East Gwillimbury, aiming to deliver sustainable and diverse events that are enjoyed by all residents. These events will bring people together, build social connections, meet local needs and enhance quality of life across all the town's communities. Achieving this will require strong partnerships with and between the municipality, community organizations, event vendors and sponsors, volunteers and residents. It will also require strategic planning, organization and investment. Together these will create an event delivery system that is responsive and adapted to the Town's current and future needs.

Appendices



Appendix A – Event Venue Inventory

Outdoor Event Hosting Facilities

East Gwillimbury Civic Centre

The Civic Centre is located in Sharon. It features a large outdoor green space (~11,000m²) with some nicely shaded areas. This space is used for outdoor events including Music Nights and the Farmer's Market. While it is not a purpose-built outdoor event space it can accommodate a variety of activities. It is centrally located, co-located with other municipal services which helps draw people to the civic area, has good parking (including EV charging stations), bus stop access, and is just off a main transportation corridor. A town-owned portable stage is used on-site for Music Nights and can be leased by the day by other event providers.

East Gwillimbury Sports Complex

This complex is located in Sharon, 1.5km from the Civic Centre. The parking lot and sports fields adjacent to the arena building are used for outdoor events. They were not purpose built for non-sporting functions but successfully accommodate outdoor annual events including Noon Years Eve (mainstage outdoors), the Holiday Market, Tree Lighting and Free Skate. The building itself houses two ice pads that operate during the winter. During the summer one ice pad is removed to allow the arena floor to be used for rentals, camps, programs, etc. The facility also has a gymnasium, multi-purpose rooms, a large hall with a kitchen, washroom and change room facilities. There is also a playground on site. The complex is on a septic system which limits its capacity. Events hosted indoors at this location include Mayor and Council Pancake Breakfast, International Women's Day, Family Fun Day, Noon Years Eve, Volunteer Appreciation and the Holiday Market.

Mount Albert Lions Community Centre

This community centre is the town's biggest site for outdoor events. Town-run Canada Day festivities and a community-run sports day take place here. The centre features a large banquet hall and kitchen, baseball diamonds, soccer fields, open green space, a playground and parking. Parking space is limited however, the town offers a shuttle service for Canada Day attendees. The centre is close to the village of Mount Albert, just off Highway 48.

Municipal Parks

The Town manages over 40 parks. These are distributed across its many communities. Each park is unique and offers differing amenities. Some have washroom facilities, and some do not. There are three picnic shelters available to book for events.

Indoor Event Hosting Facilities

River Drive Park Community Centre

This community centre is in River Drive Park. It has a hall with a capacity of 100 people.

Holland Landing Community Centre

Located in Holland-Landing, this facility includes several bookable rooms including one with a capacity of 180, and two with capacities of 80 each.

Ross Family Complex

This facility is in Mount Albert. It includes a program room, seniors' room, gymnasium, splash pad, picnic shelter, and soccer field. It is connected to the Shannon Park Trail. The Easter Bunny Hike is hosted from this complex.

Mount Albert Community Centre

This centre is in the heart of the village of Mount Albert. It includes a large hall with a stage and kitchen. The adjacent community park includes a skate park, a playground, and a large bookable picnic shelter.

Harvest Hills Activity Centre

This centre is connected to the Phoebe Gilman Public School. The Town shares the school's gymnasium facility for programming year round (fitness, cultural activities and youth camps). It is near Harvest Village, a future mixed-use community.

North Union Community Centre

This facility is in Queensville. It is an old schoolhouse offering an accessible hall and kitchen with a capacity of 56. It also has a playground, picnic shelter and green space at the back of the building.

Appendix B – Expanded Strategic Alignment Analysis

The following outlines the strategic alignment of the Events Strategy with municipal plans.

Strategic Plan 2022-2026¹⁹

The plan guides the Town's activities so that it may continue to provide programs and services that support a sustainable future where residents and businesses can thrive. It is a strategic priority of the plan to 'Provide value for tax dollars through delivery of programs and services that support our economic, environmental, and social goals'. Direction under this priority most applicable to events includes:

- Develop high-quality programs that promote healthy and active living and encompass the diverse interests of our residents
- Provide programs and services that are inclusive, affordable, and accessible
- Support and promote the arts, culture and heritage of East Gwillimbury

Key related deliverables that align with this strategy include:

- Support placemaking and community connection through a wide variety of events and recreation programs that support the diverse needs and interests of our community

East Gwillimbury Official Plan, 2023²⁰

This plan is a tool to implement land use policies and advance the community's vision for its future. The plan sets a vision for where and how the town will grow out to 2051. This vision sees East Gwillimbury evolving as a "balanced, sustainable, and complete community", the town's unique villages being supported as they grow and diversify, and the town overall continuing to support and celebrate a high quality of life for current and future residents of all backgrounds and abilities. While the Plan does not specifically address events, some elements are aligned with this event strategy including support for public gathering spaces and community destinations, support for the development of a range of public service facilities to meet the needs of residents and businesses, and colocation of facilities and services to create community hubs.

Health and Active Living Master Plan, 2018²¹

This master plan outlines how residents will enjoy parks, recreation, and culture through 2028. It aligns with this event strategy in that it directs the Town to provide a wide variety of recreation and cultural programs, and to be a service arranger that ensures services are available through partnerships. Recommendations of the plan that most relate to events include:

- Develop policies and processes that promote culture and heritage preservation and special events expansion.
- Implement program planning and permitting of public space recommendations as practical and applicable.
- Leverage outdoor spaces as presented where practical and applicable.

Cultural Plan, 2012²²

This Plan outlines a vision for culture, guiding principles and related goals. The vision is to celebrate and leverage the town's "diverse cultural resources to build shared identity and future prosperity". The goal of the plan that is most related to events is: Build a Strong and Collaborative Cultural Sector. Under this goal related actions include building a strong cultural network, creating a community calendar of events, and expanding cultural marketing and promotion to increase attendance at local events and activities.

Town of East Gwillimbury Economic Development Strategy 2021-2026²³

This strategy guides the Town's economic development activity and strategic initiatives. This event strategy supports the development of secondary target sectors including tourism. The economic development strategy identifies tourism as a secondary target sector and acknowledges that expanding on existing strengths and 'facilitating strategic investment into accommodation and event space will position the Town to secure a larger slice of Ontario's robust tourism industry'.

Thinking Green, EG's Environmental Strategy, 2024²⁴

This strategy guides EG's efforts to become a more diverse, resilient and sustainable town. It takes a holistic view of the environment and contains five thematic areas: Land, Air, Water, Biodiversity, and Empowerment. Empowerment directs the Town to 'embrace and support internal and external education, events, and action for all thematic areas. The strategy also directs the development of a sustainable events policy. (This policy is currently in draft form).

Indigeneity, Inclusion, Equity, Diversity and Accessibility (IIDEA) Action Plan, 2024²⁵

The action plan builds on the Town's Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion Framework. It maps out the journey of creating a Town where diversity is celebrated, everyone feels a sense of belonging, and programs, spaces, and services are accessible and equitable. The plan also furthers the Town's commitment to Truth and Reconciliation. The plan includes an initiative to advance the equitable celebration and recognition of IIDEA dates of significance through communications and events. Among the related actions are those to engage staff and residents on National Indigenous Peoples Day, the National Day of Truth and Reconciliation and Orange Shirt Day, Pride Month, Black History Month, and Newcomer Welcome Week, among others.



Photo Credit: Expedition Management Consulting Ltd.

Appendix C – Expanded Engagement Results

Online Survey Results

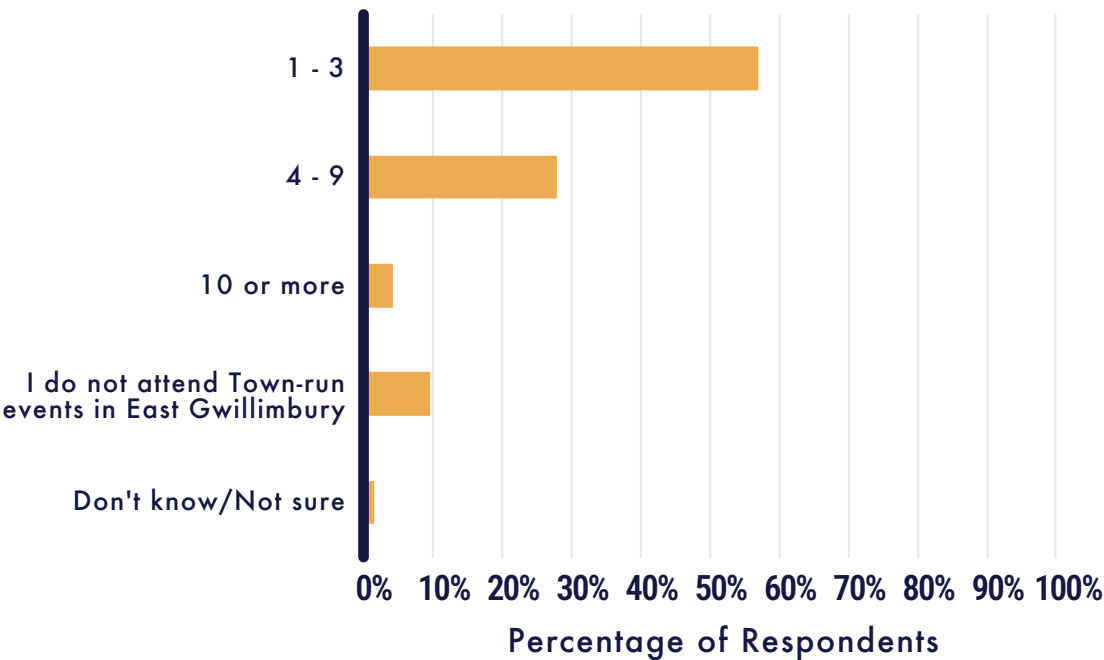
A survey collected input from residents, residents of neighbouring municipalities, event vendors, event organizers, organizations/businesses, and visitors from June 24 – September 3, 2024. In total, 562 responses were received.

Residents

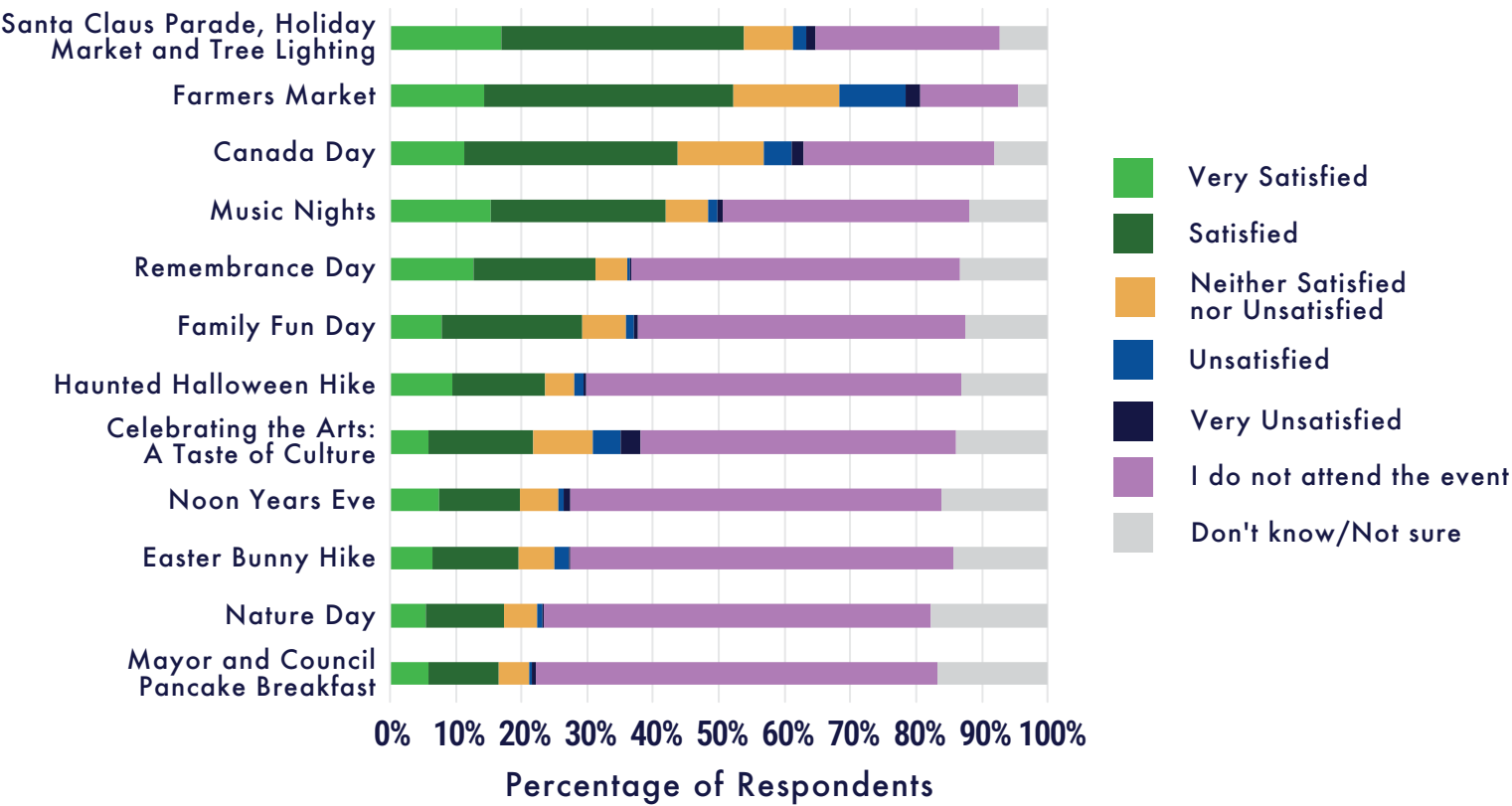
The online survey streamed respondents to different questions based on if they identified themselves as an event vendor, event organizer, a representative of an organization/business, resident of a neighbouring municipality, visitor or resident. The following information is applicable specifically to survey respondents who identified themselves as a resident of a neighbouring municipality, visitor, and resident. Of the responses received, 73% of respondents identified as female, 22% identified as male, 1% identified as cisgender, 0.2% identified as gender non-conforming, and 5% preferred not to say. Respondents were primarily between the ages of 40-49 (32%), 30-39 (22%), 50-59 (17%), and 60-69 (16%).



On average, how many Town-run events do you attend each year?

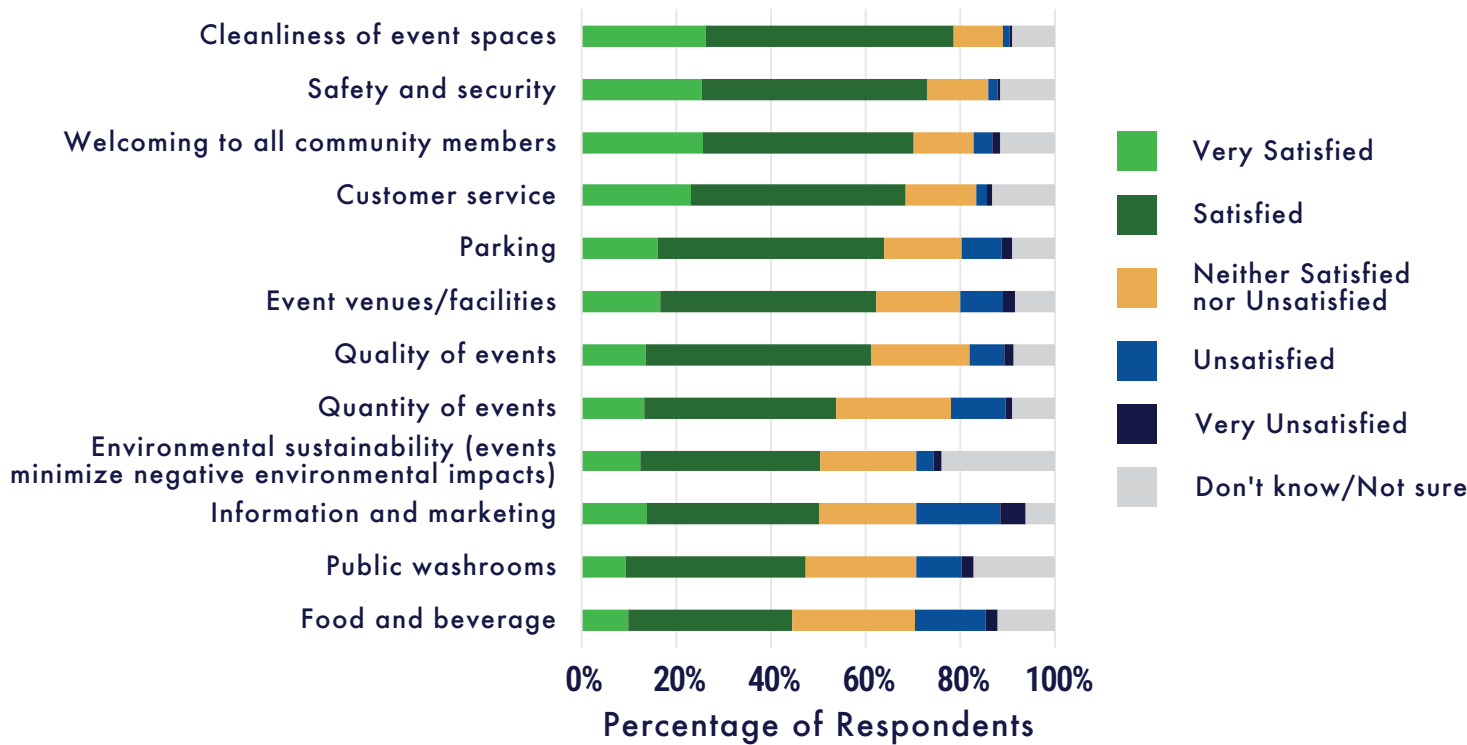


Please rate your satisfaction with Town-run events in East Gwillimbury.

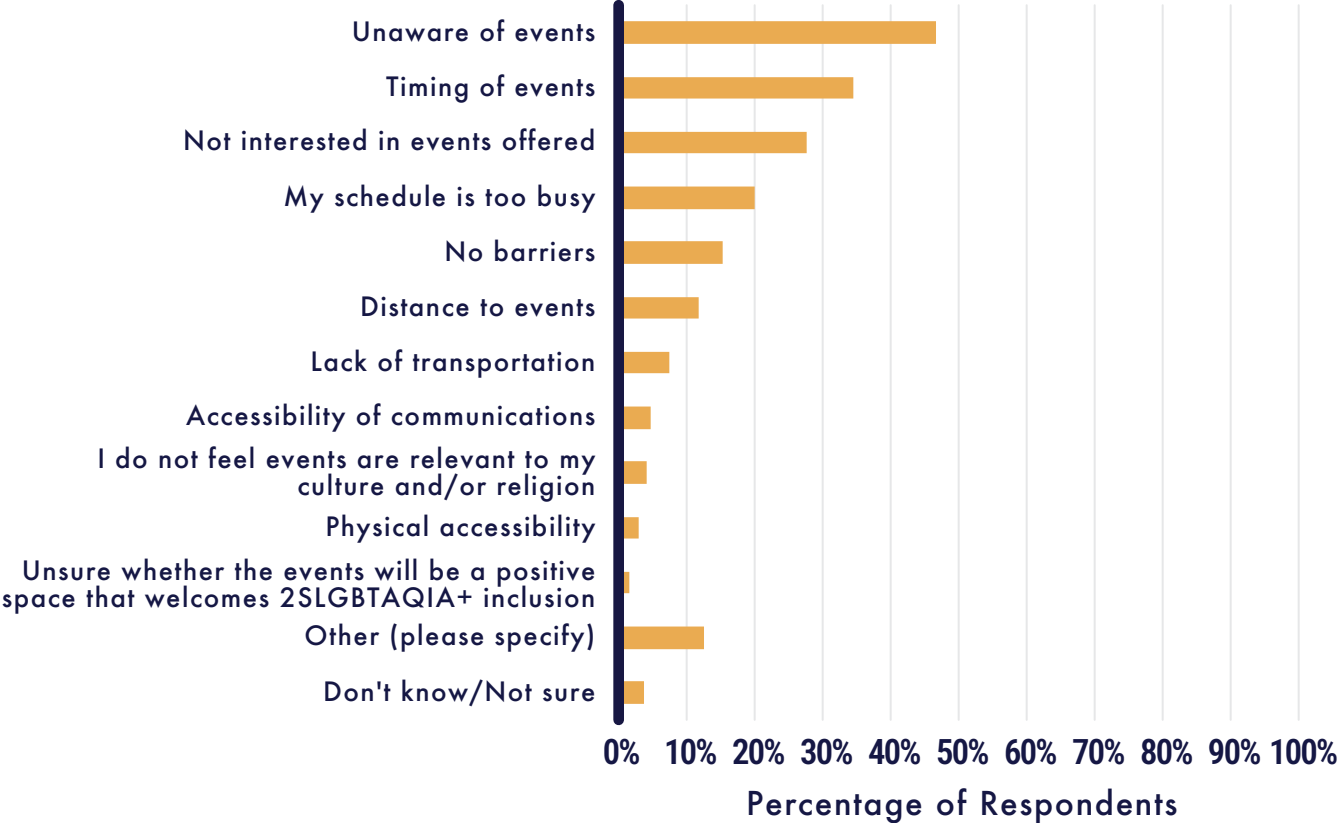




Please rate your satisfaction with the following aspects of Town-run events in East Gwillimbury.

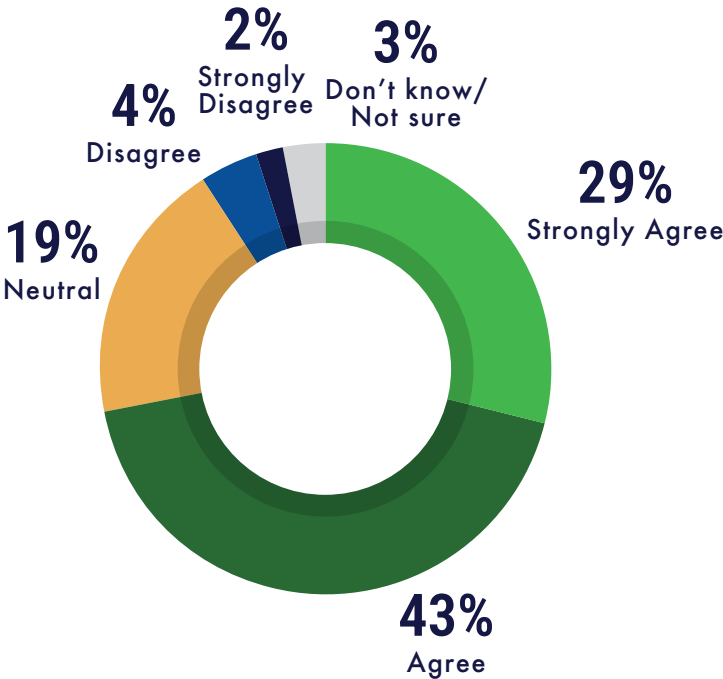


What barriers (if any) prevent you from attending Town-run events? Please select all that apply.

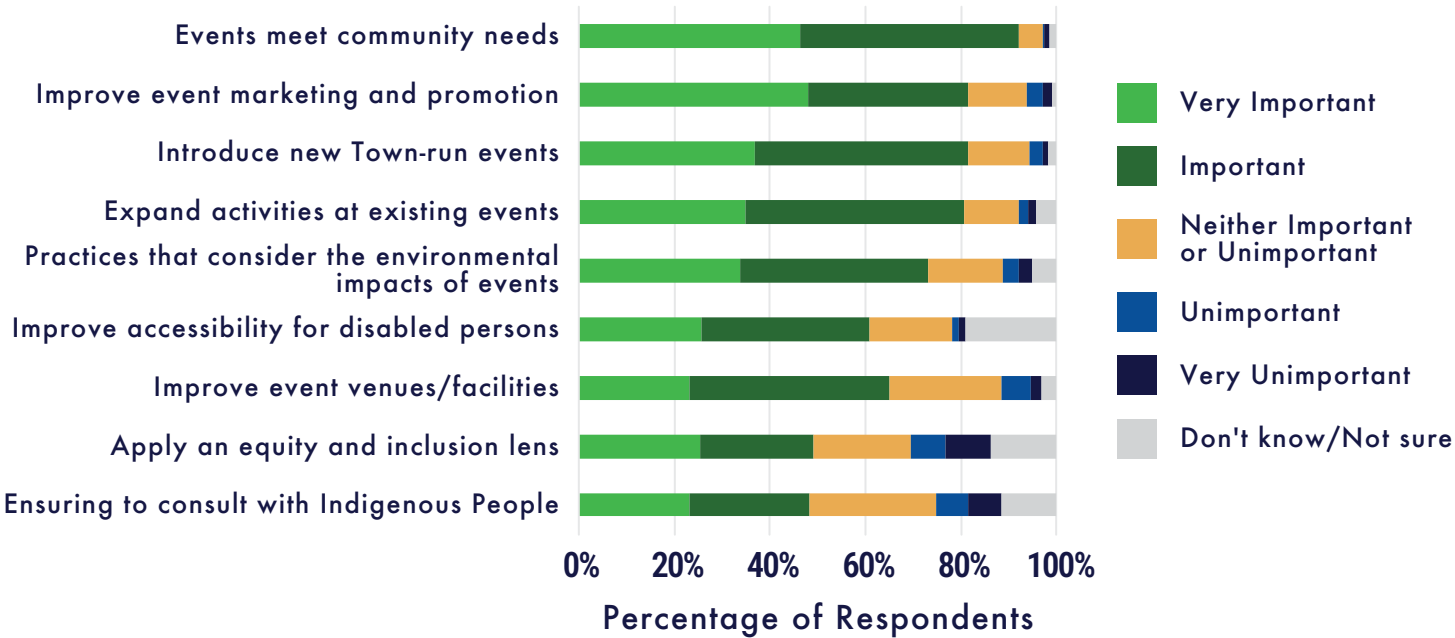




Please rate your level of agreement with the following statement:
Attending Town-run events in East Gwillimbury help me feel connected to my community.

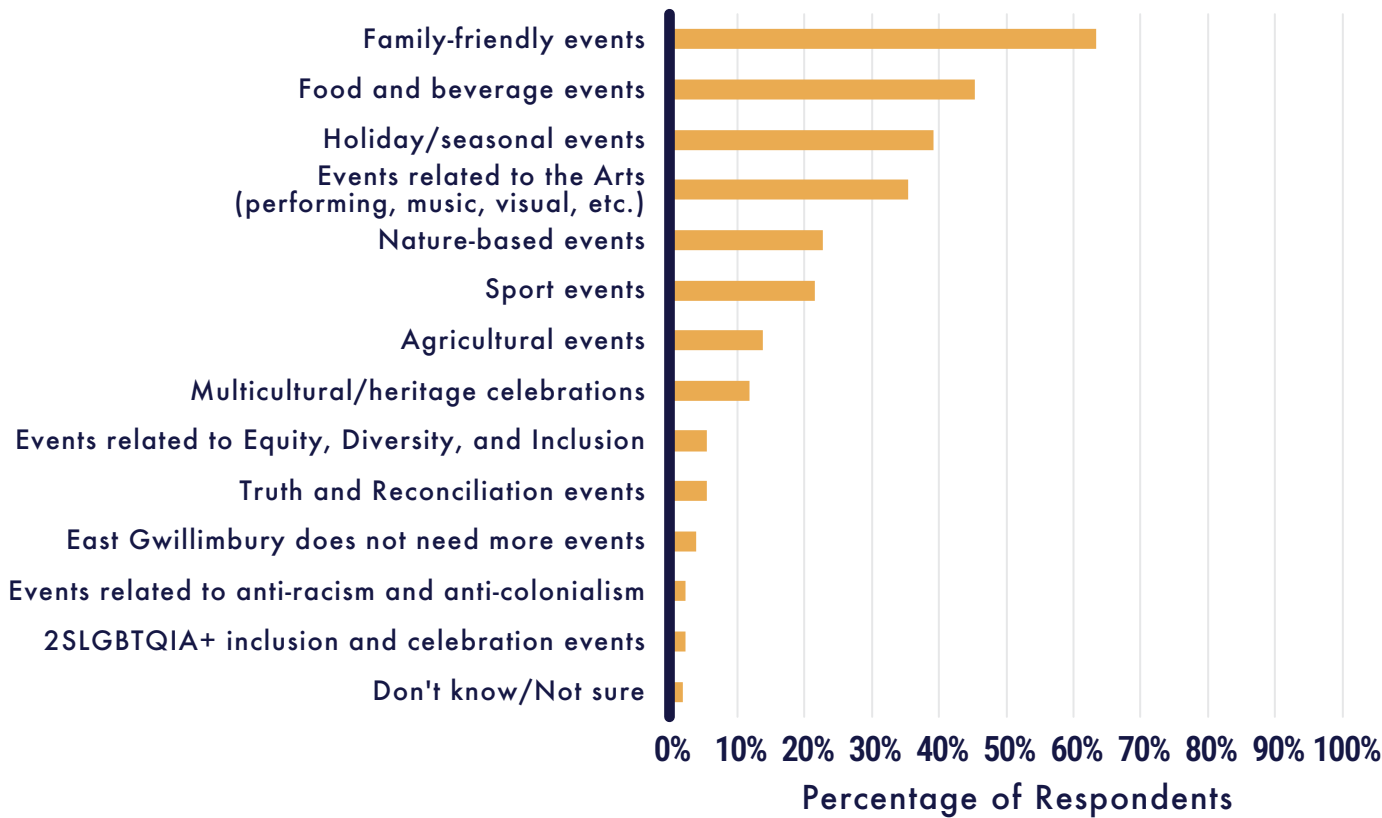


As we develop the Events Strategy for East Gwillimbury, please indicate the importance of the following statements:

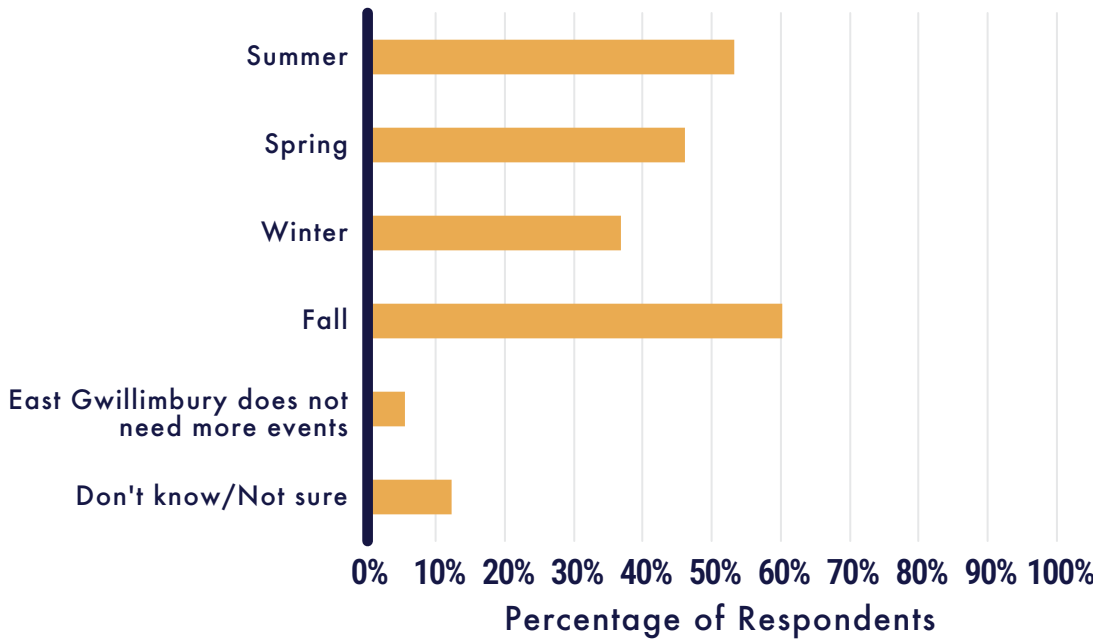




What types of events should East Gwillimbury focus on in the future? Please select up to three options.

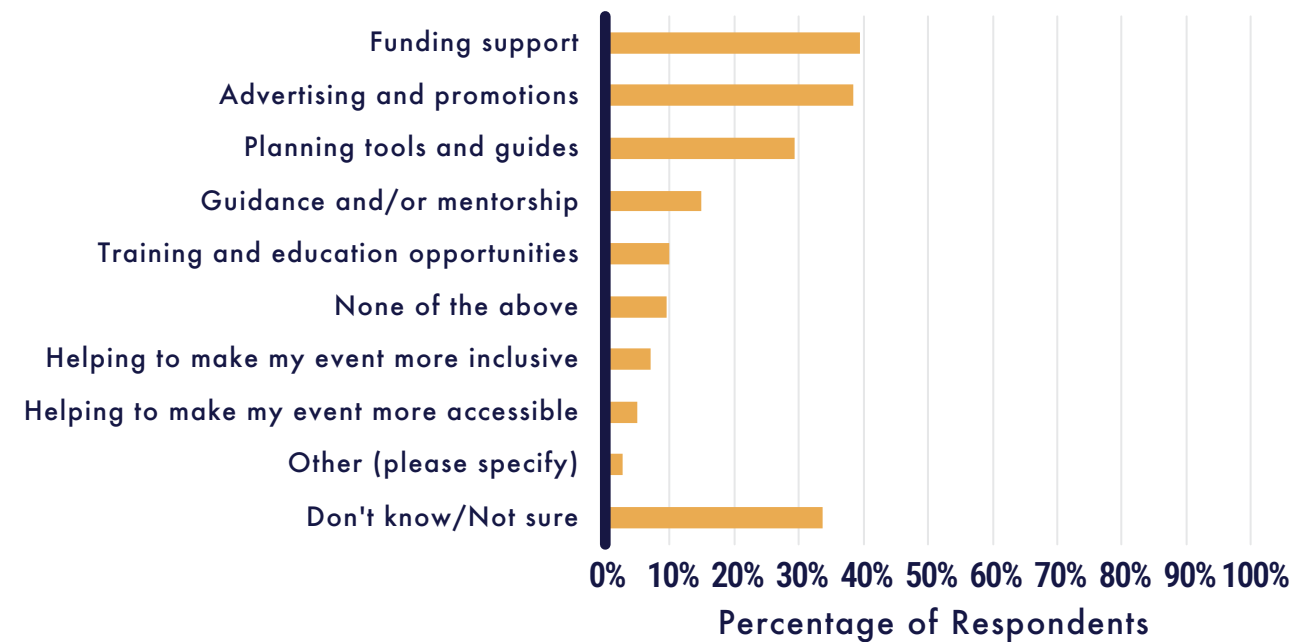


In which season(s) should East Gwillimbury consider adding more events? Please select all that apply.





If you were interested in hosting an event in East Gwillimbury, what assistance and/or resources would be the most helpful to you? Please select up to three options.



What one thing could be done to most improve events in East Gwillimbury?

Respondents identified the following most often:

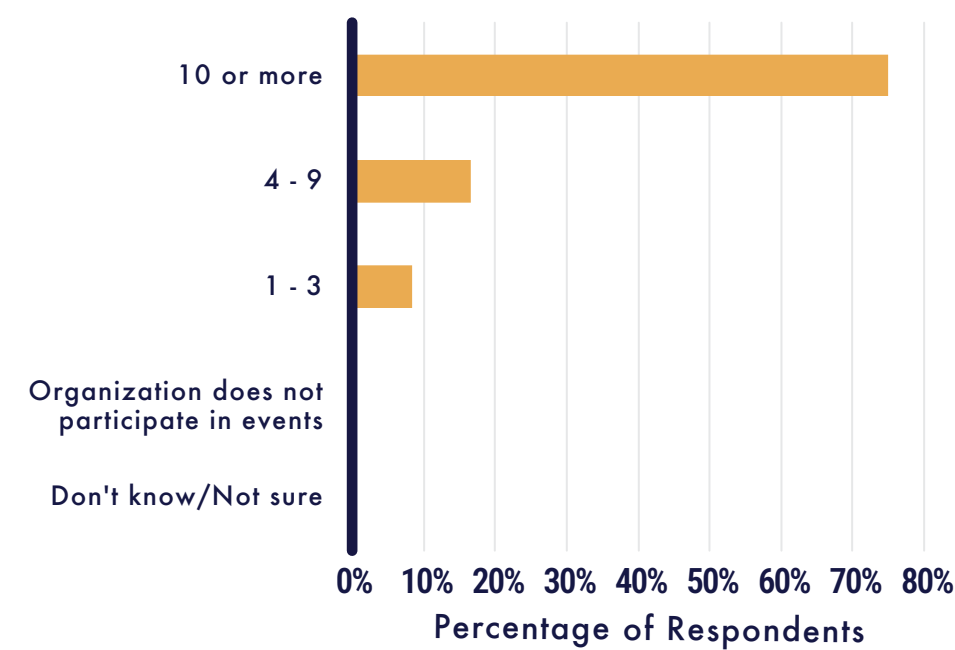
- More advertising for events including more advanced notice, social media, signage, and hard copy marketing.
- Comments related to new events, enhancing the quality of events, and more variety of events.
- Increasing the number of vendors at events.
- More family friendly events and more events catered towards seniors, adults, and teens.
- Expanding the location of events including Holland Landing, Mount Albert, and Sharon.
- Adjusting the timing of events to start earlier.
- Keeping events community focused and more community engagement.
- Enhanced facilities (e.g., heating huts at the Santa Claus Parade, washrooms, permanent amphitheatre, and a covered venue at the Farmers Market).
- Ensuring all events are inclusive to everyone.
- Expanding the variety of activities at events (e.g., new activities and more kids' activities).
- Concerns about the cost of new events.
- More free events.
- More funding to expand events.
- Challenges with parking.
- Satisfaction with how events are run.
- More public transportation options (e.g., shuttle services).

Event Vendors

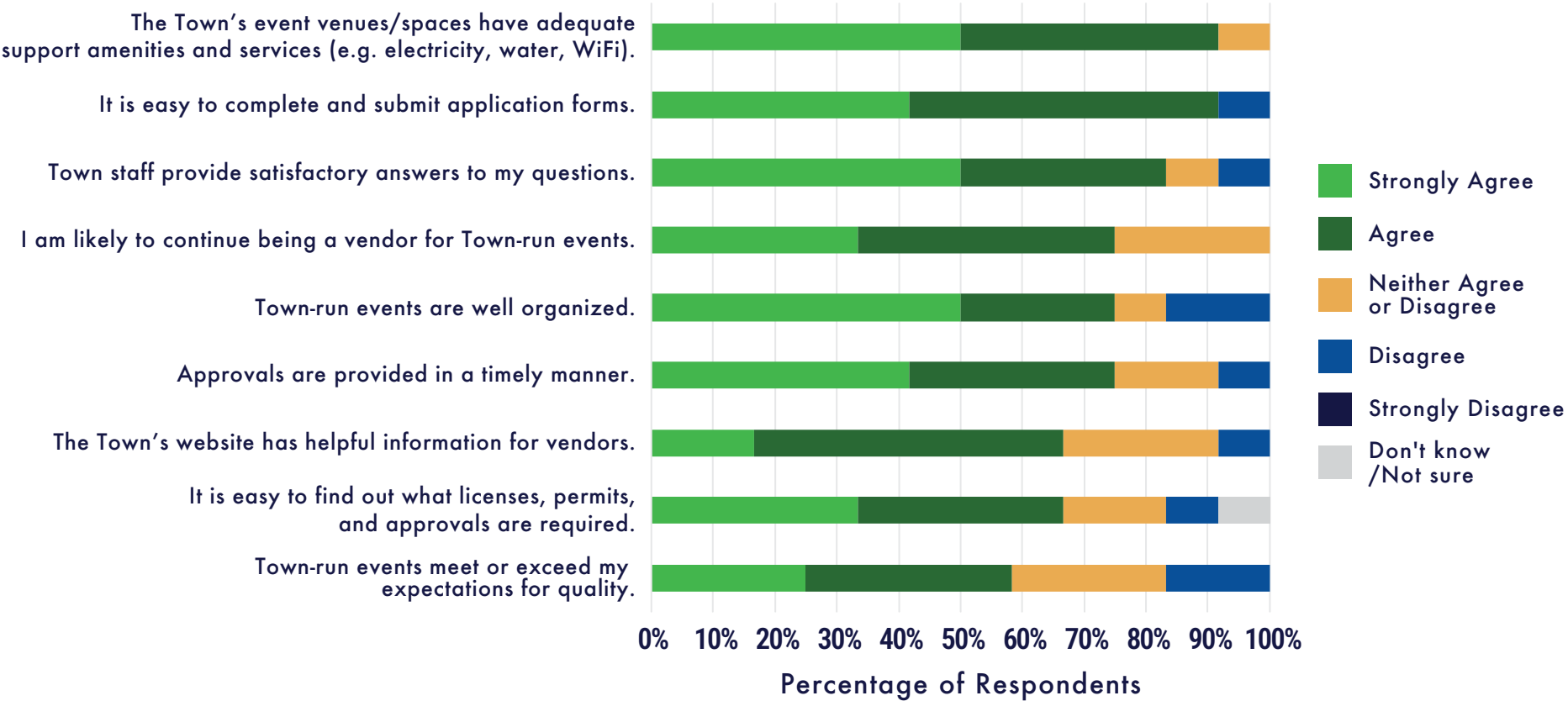
The following information is applicable specifically to survey respondents to identified themselves as an event vendor.



On average, how many events does your business/organization participate in as a vendor each year?

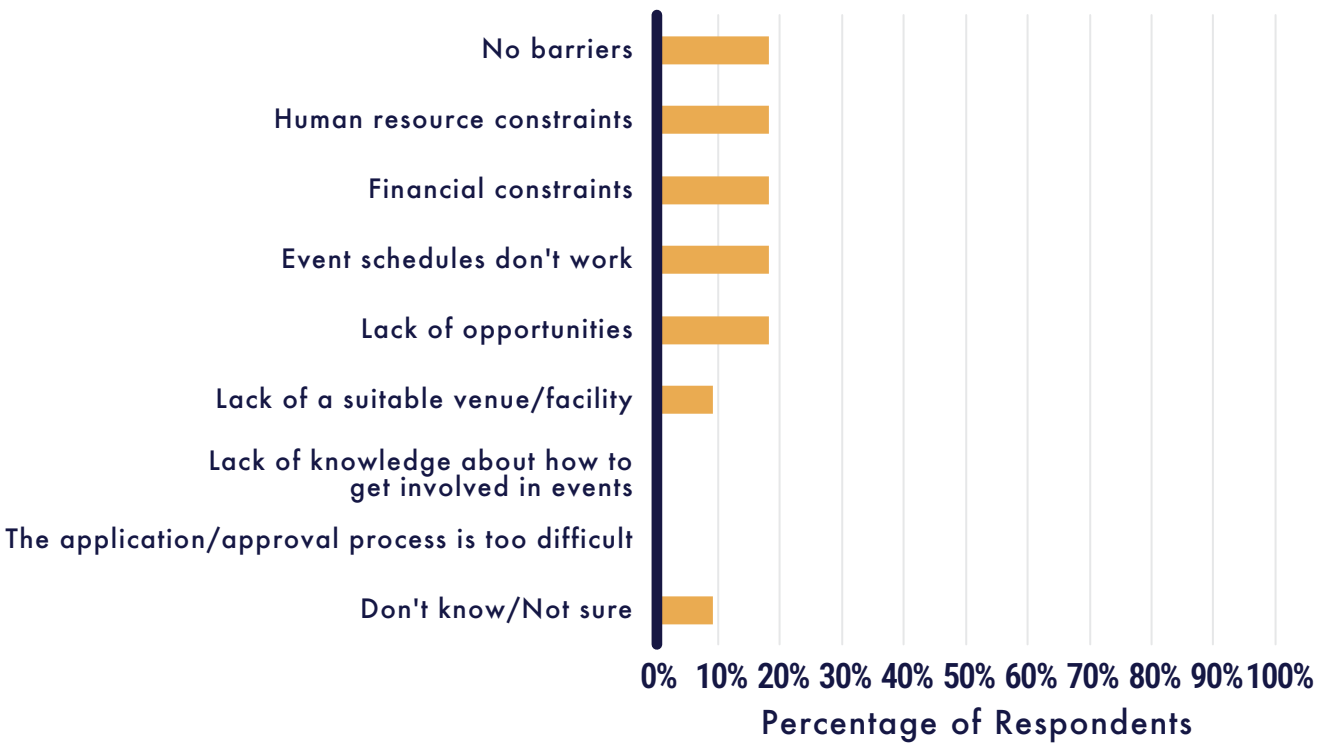


Please rate your level of agreement with the following statements related to being a vendor for Town-run events. Note that Town-run events include: Canada Day, Celebrating the Arts: A Taste of Culture, Easter Bunny Hike, Family Fun Day, Farmers Market, Haunted Halloween Hike, Mayor and Council Pancake Breakfast, Music Nights, Nature Day, Noon Years Eve, Remembrance Day, Santa Claus Parade, Holiday Market and Tree Lighting.

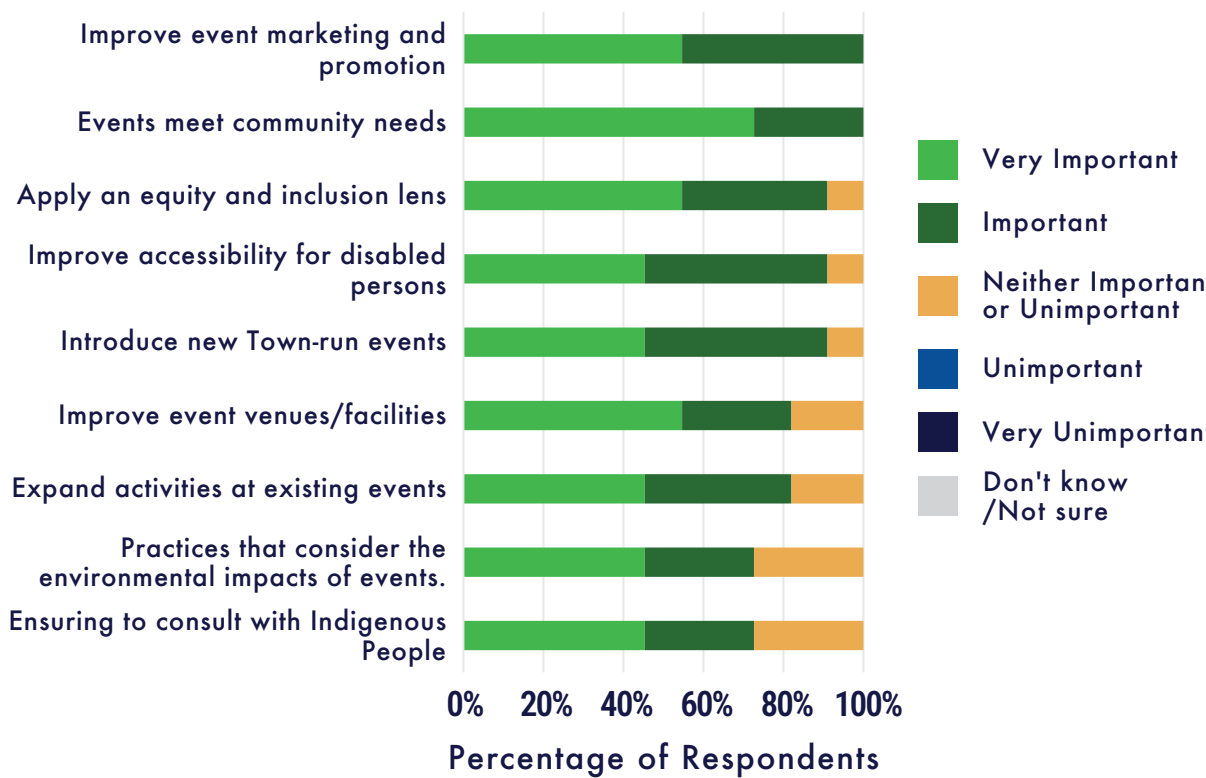




What, if anything, prevents your business/organization from participating in Town-run events as a vendor more often? (check all that apply)

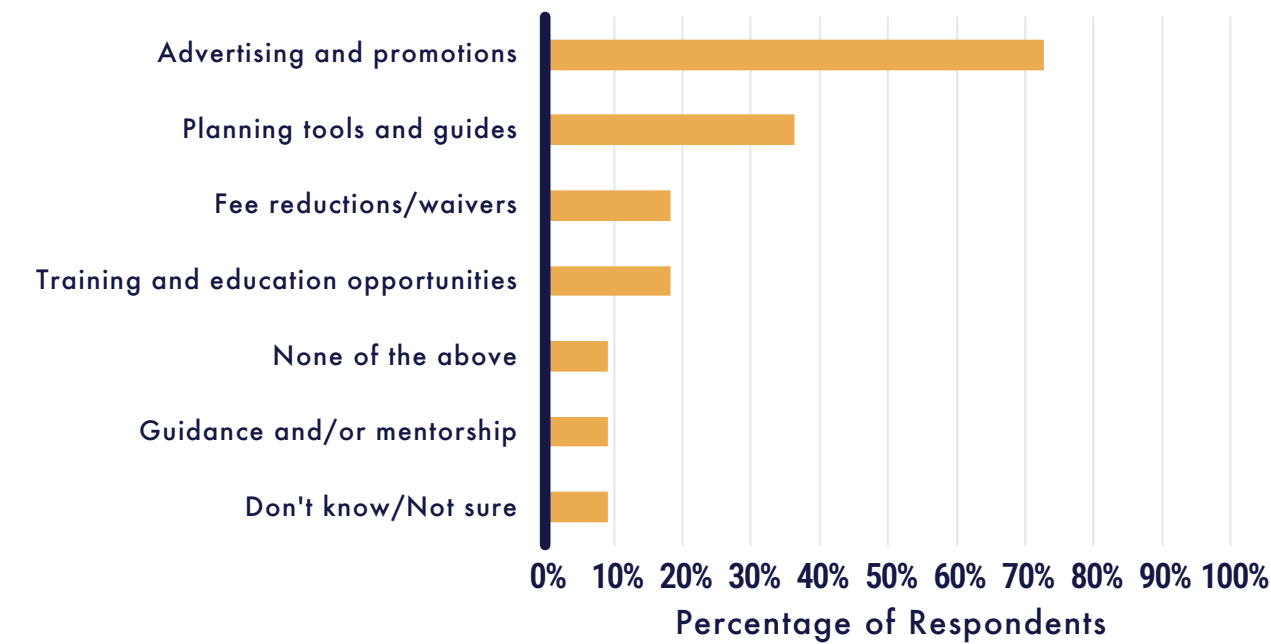


As we develop the Events Strategy for East Gwillimbury, please indicate the importance of the following statements:

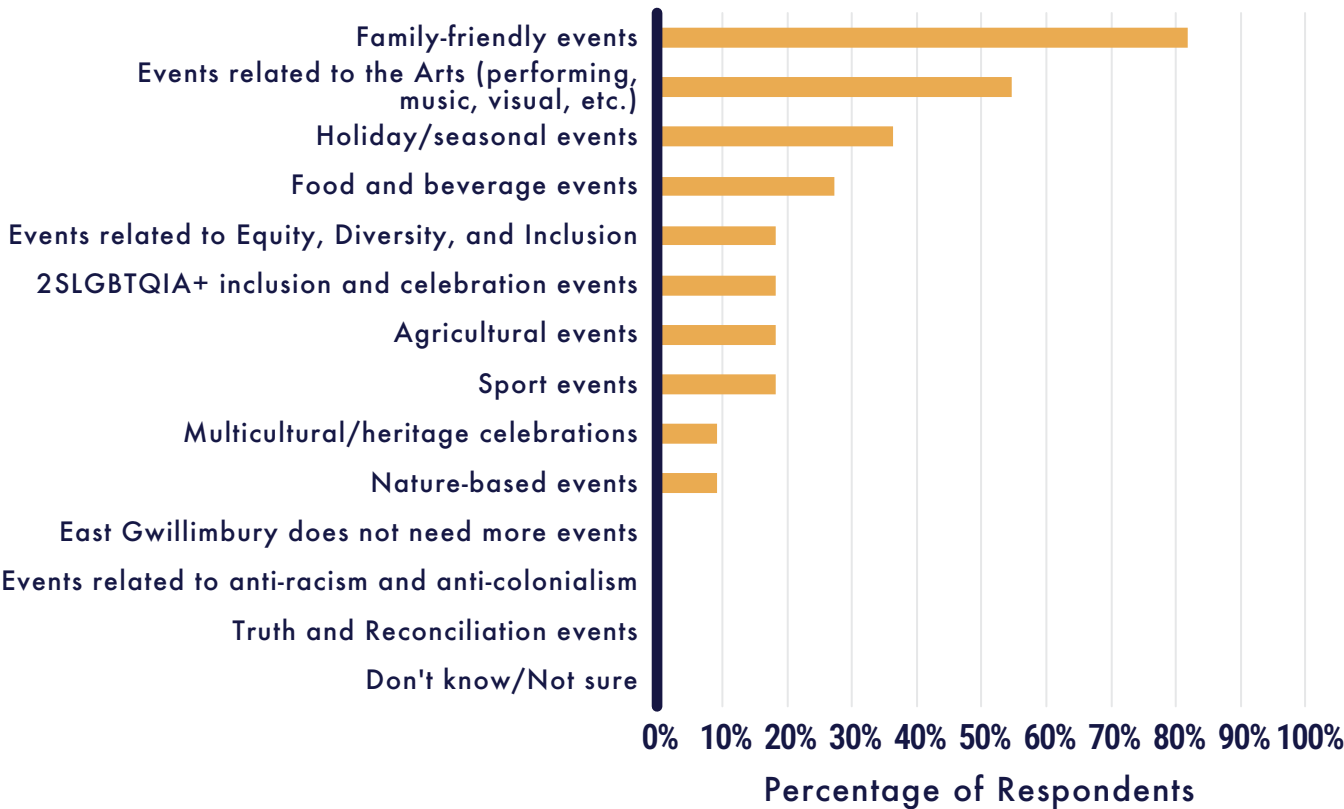




If your business/organization were looking to provide services to a Town-run event in East Gwillimbury, what assistance and/or resources would be most helpful to you? Please select up to three options.

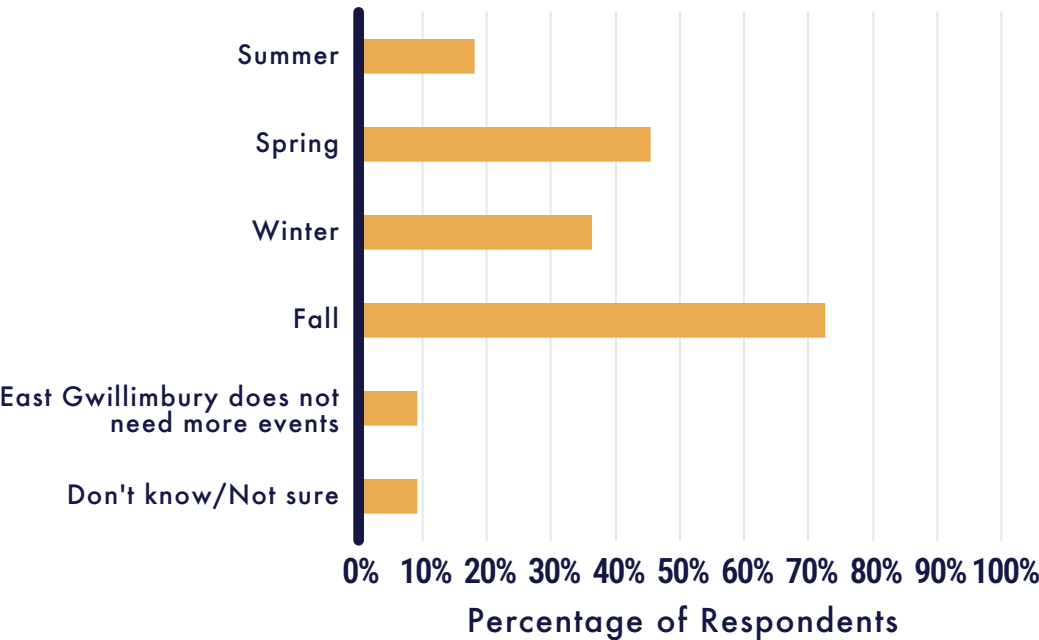


What types of events should East Gwillimbury focus on in the future? Please select up to three options.





In which season(s) should East Gwillimbury consider adding more events?



What one thing could be done to most improve events in East Gwillimbury?

Respondents indicated the following most often:

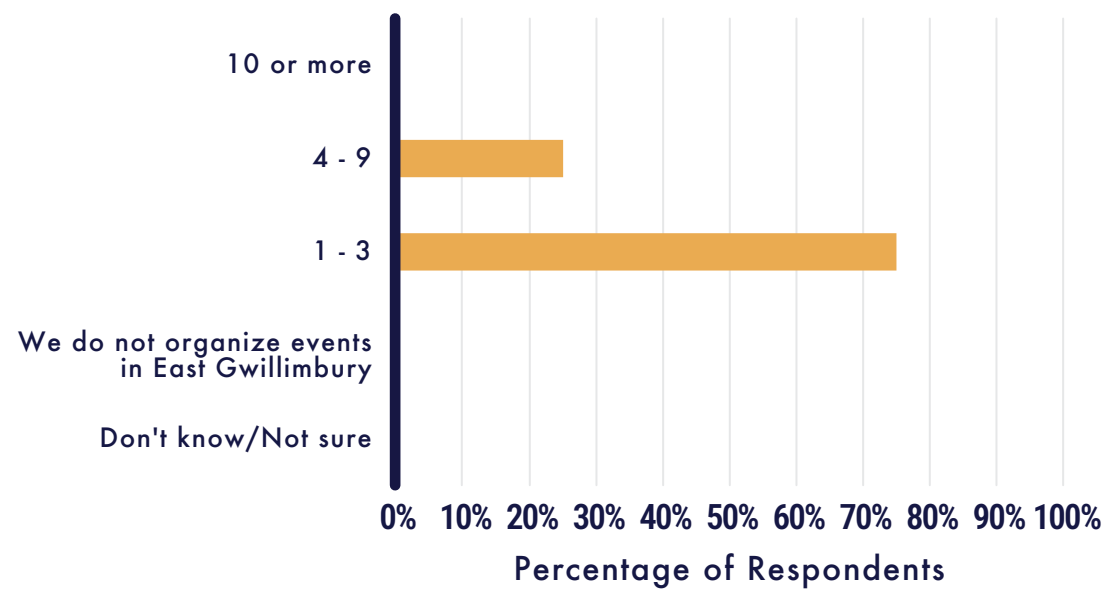
- Expanding advertising.
- Allowing vendor fees to be paid online.
- Increasing the amount of people attending events.

Event Organizers

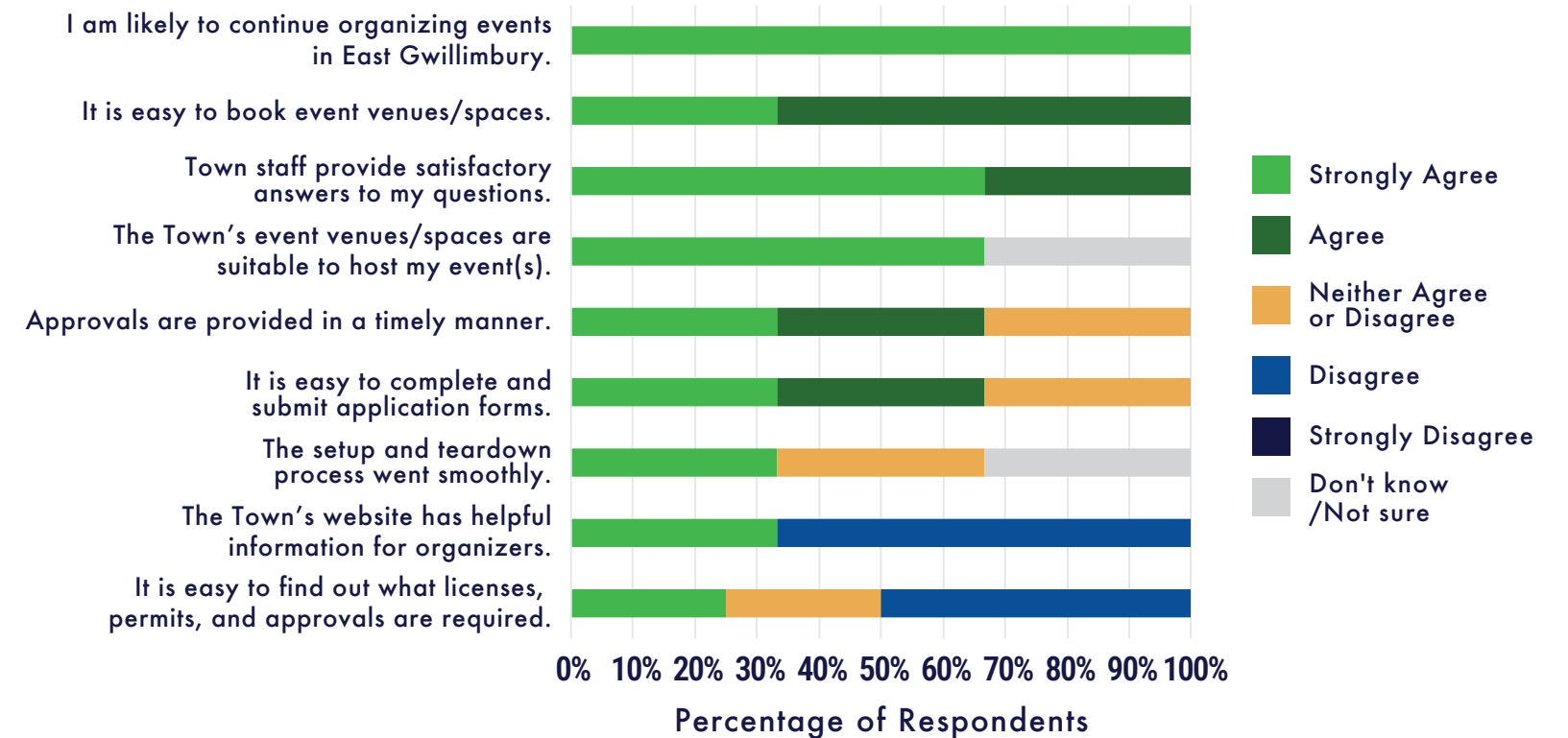
The following information is applicable specifically to survey respondents who identified themselves as an event organizer.



On average, how many events does your organization/business organize each year?

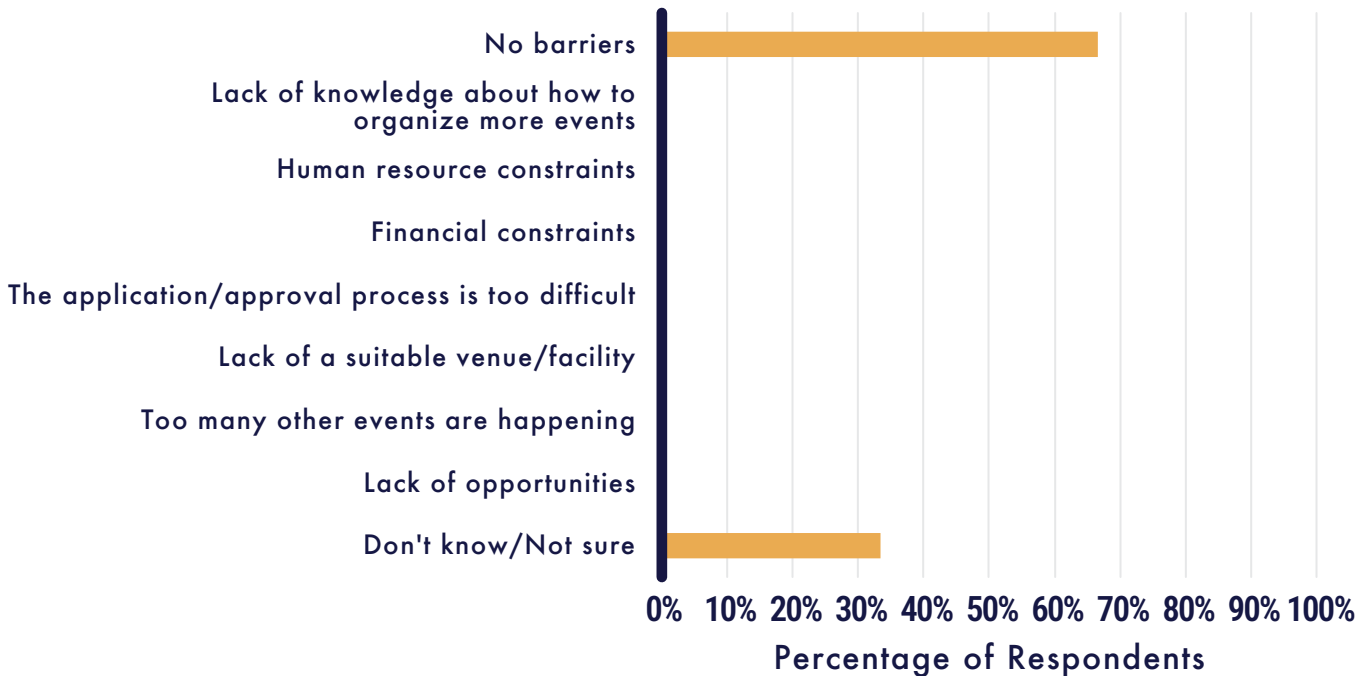


Please rate your level of agreement with the following statements related to organizing events in East Gwillimbury.

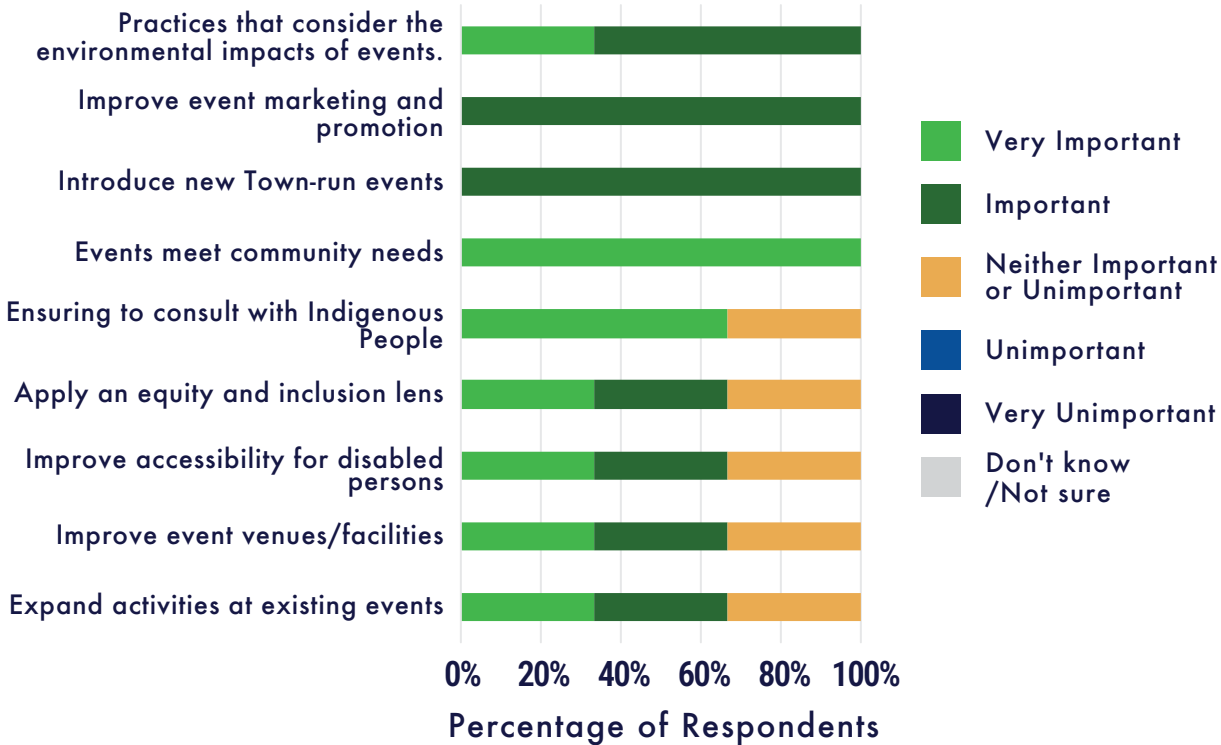




What, if anything, prevents your business/organization from organizing events more often? (check all that apply).

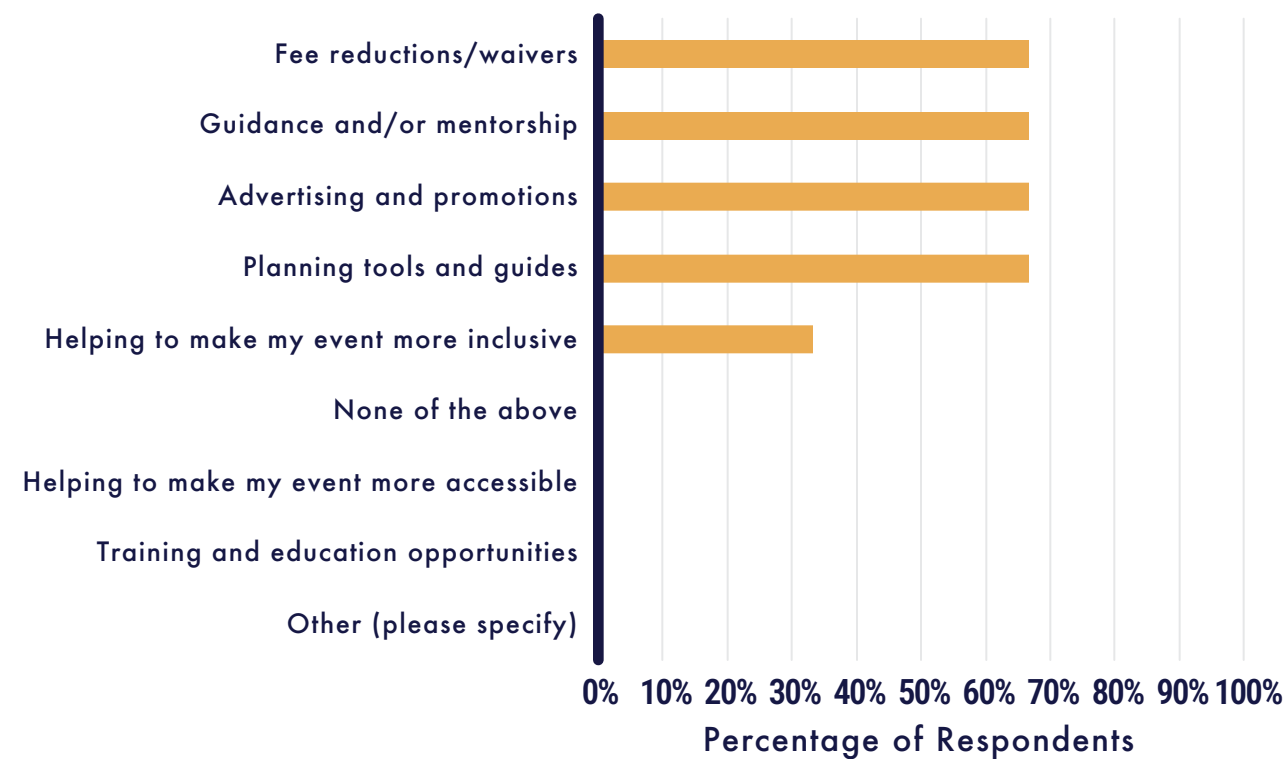


As we develop the Events Strategy for East Gwillimbury, please indicate the importance of the following statements:





If your business/organization were looking to host an event in East Gwillimbury, what assistance and/or resources would be most helpful to you? Please select up to three options.

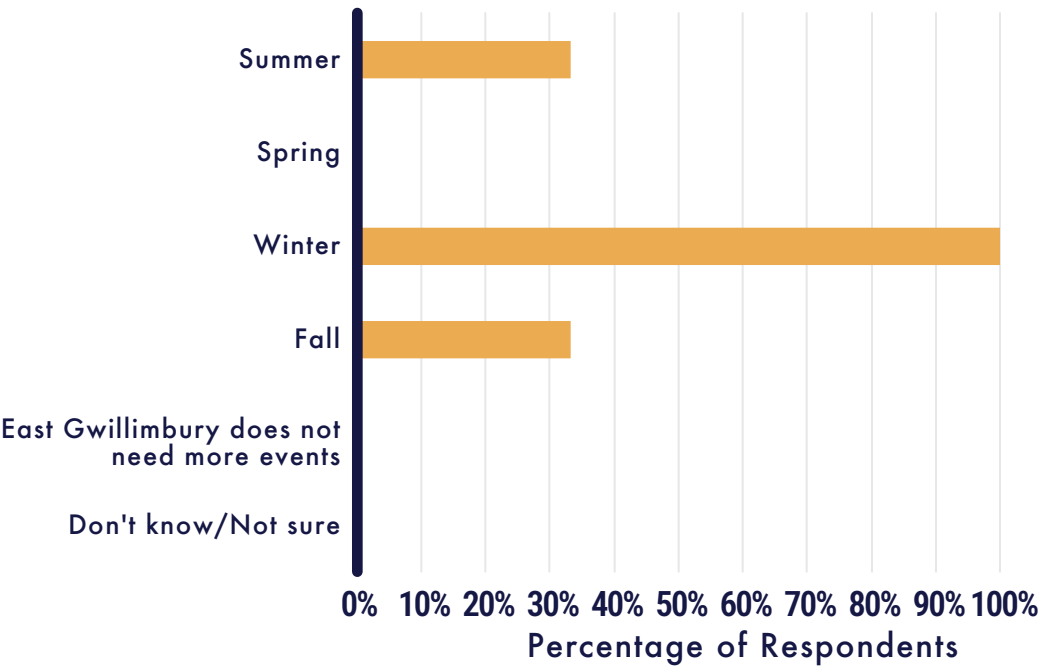


What types of events should East Gwillimbury focus on in the future? Please select up to three options.





In which season(s) should East Gwillimbury consider adding more events?



What one thing could be done to most improve events in East Gwillimbury?

Respondents identified the following most often:

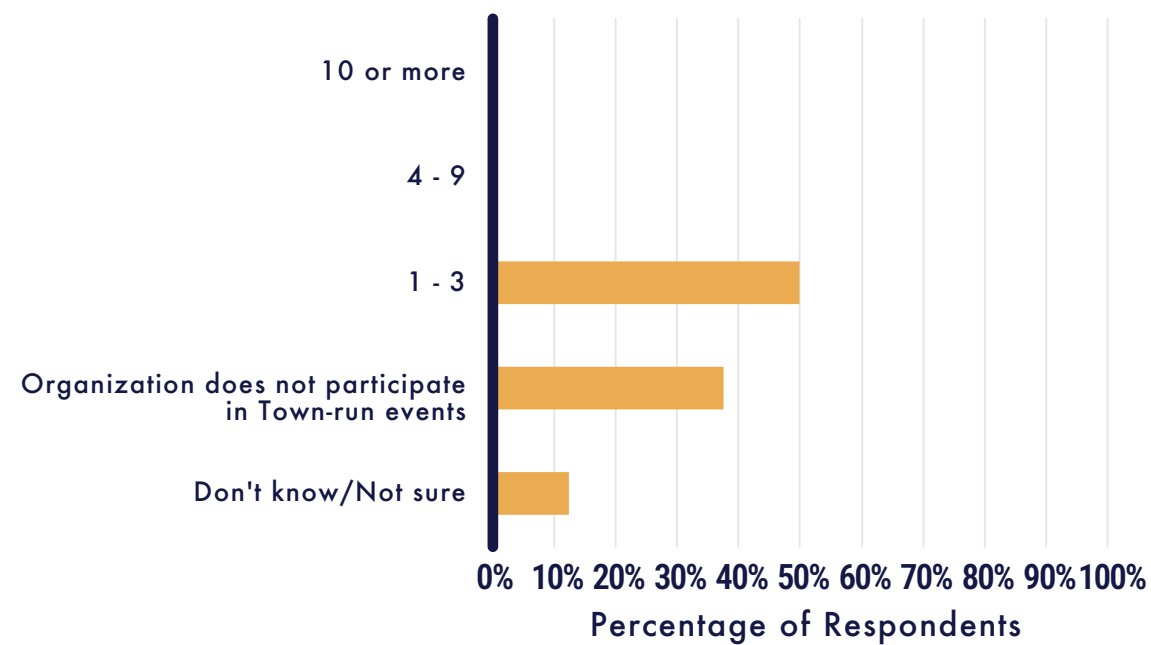
- Providing more funding.
- Advertising (social media).
- Accessibility.
- Parking.
- Equal support of Town managed events vs. volunteer managed events.

Businesses/Organizations

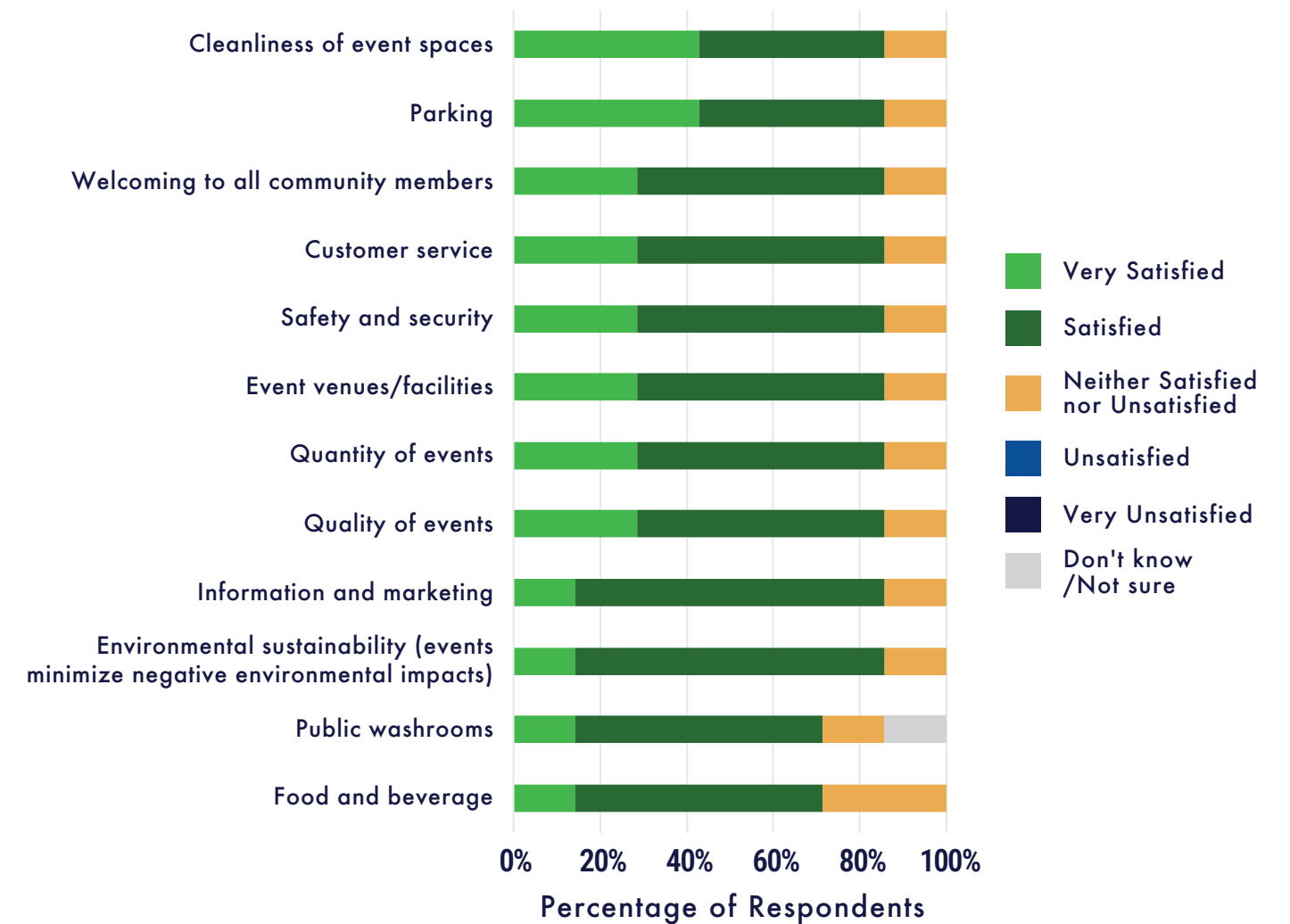
The following information is applicable specifically to survey respondents who identified themselves as a representative of a business or organization.



On average, how many Town-run events does your organization participate in each year?

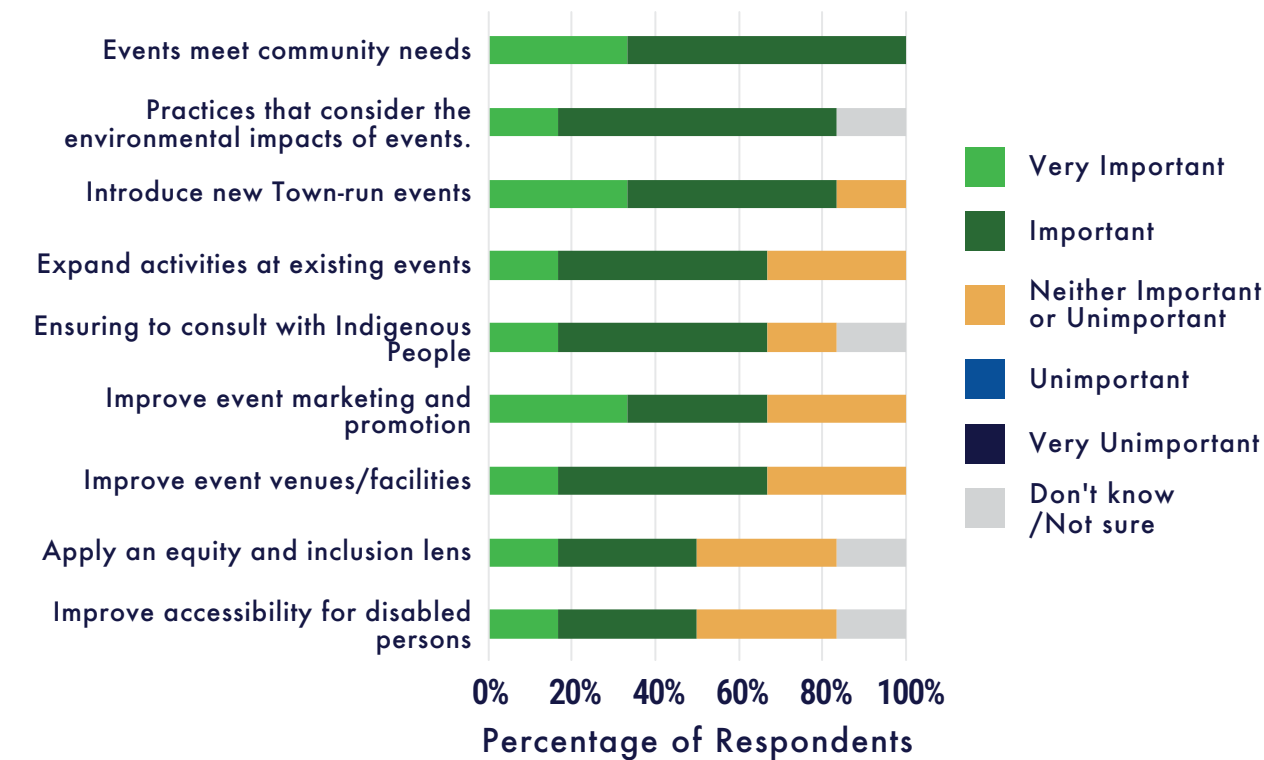


Please rate your satisfaction with the following aspects of Town-run events in East Gwillimbury.

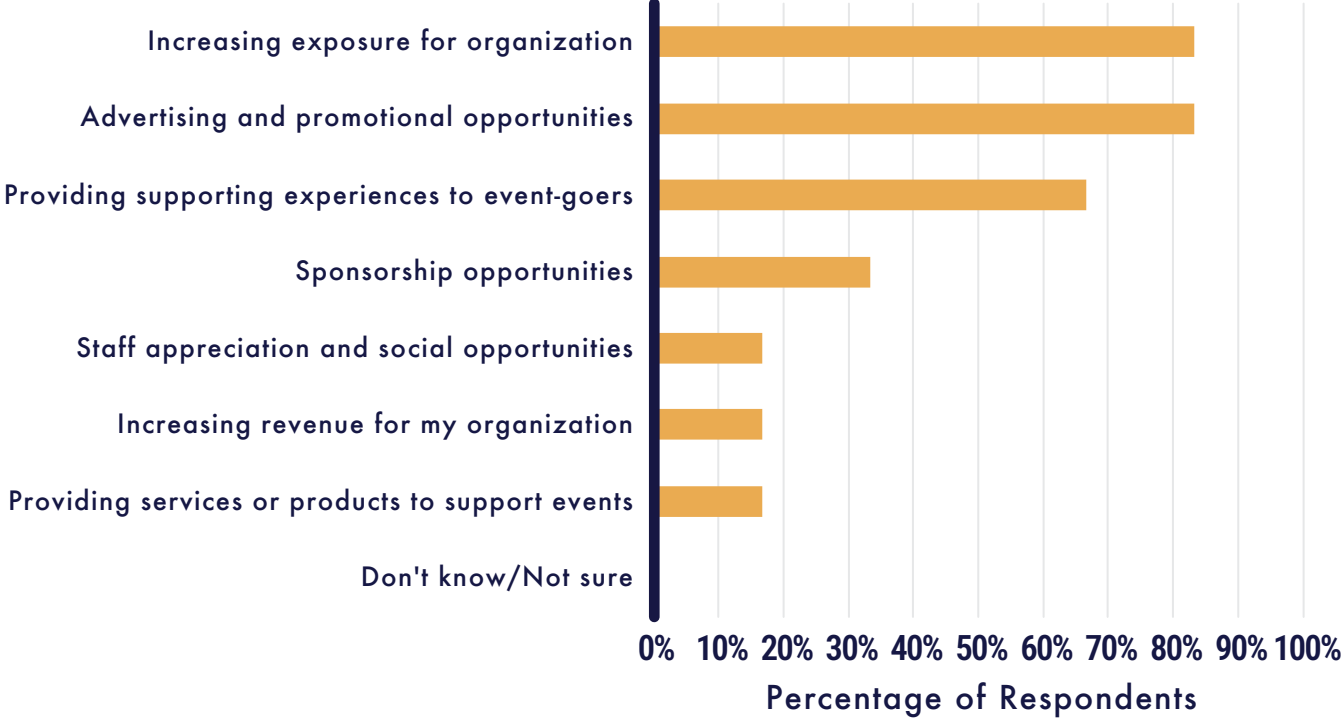




As we develop the Events Strategy for East Gwillimbury, please indicate the importance of the following statements:

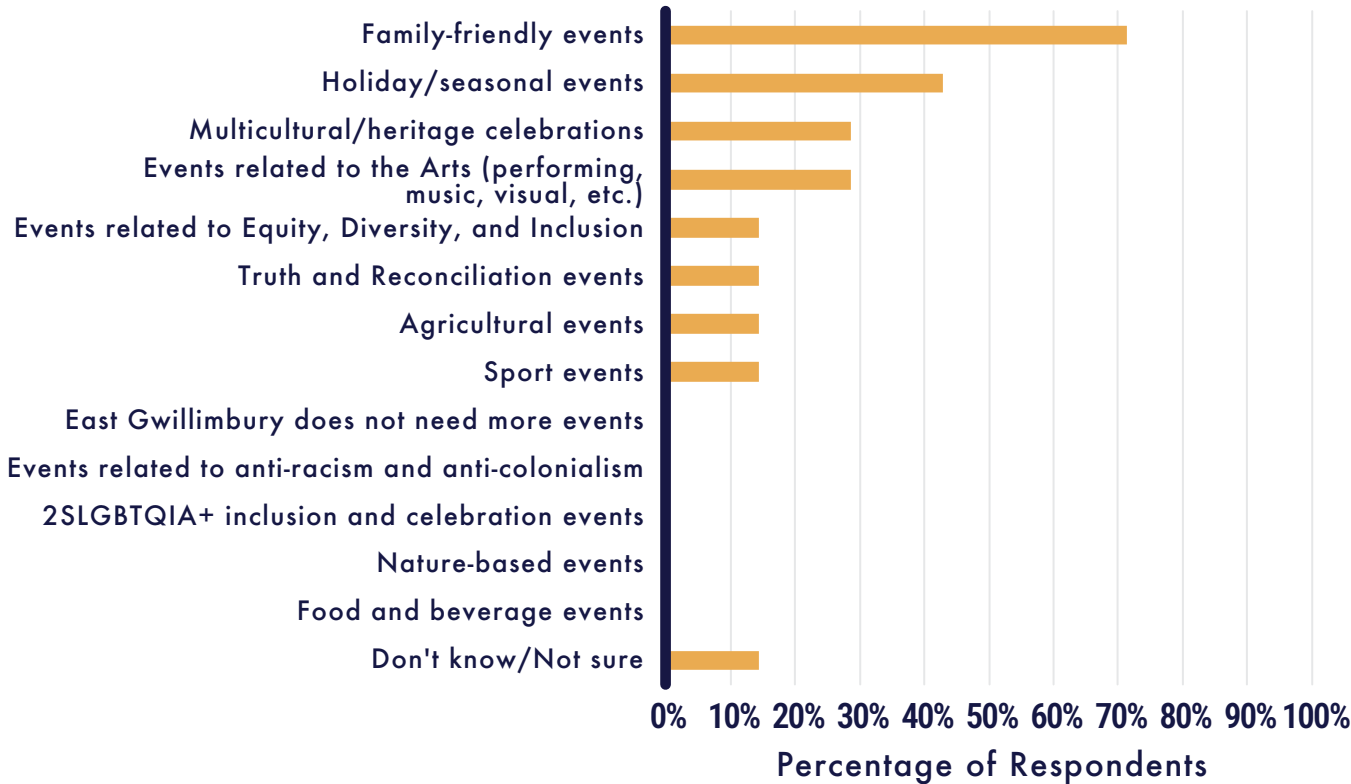


In what ways do you see your organization potentially benefiting from events? Please select all that apply.

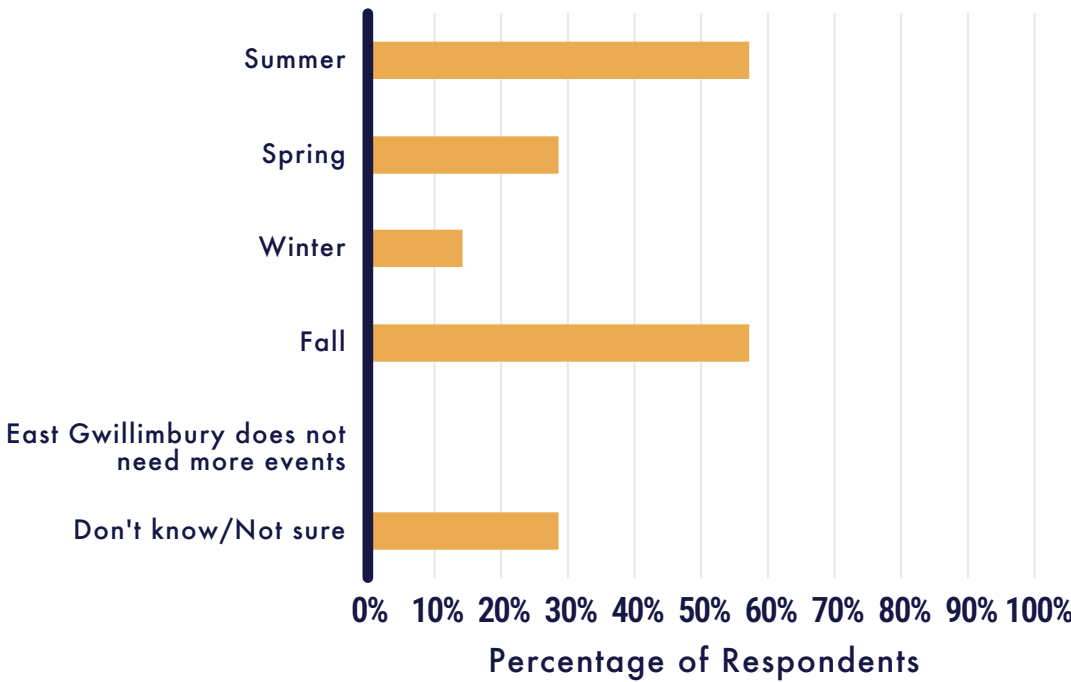




What types of events should East Gwillimbury focus on in the future? Please select up to three options.

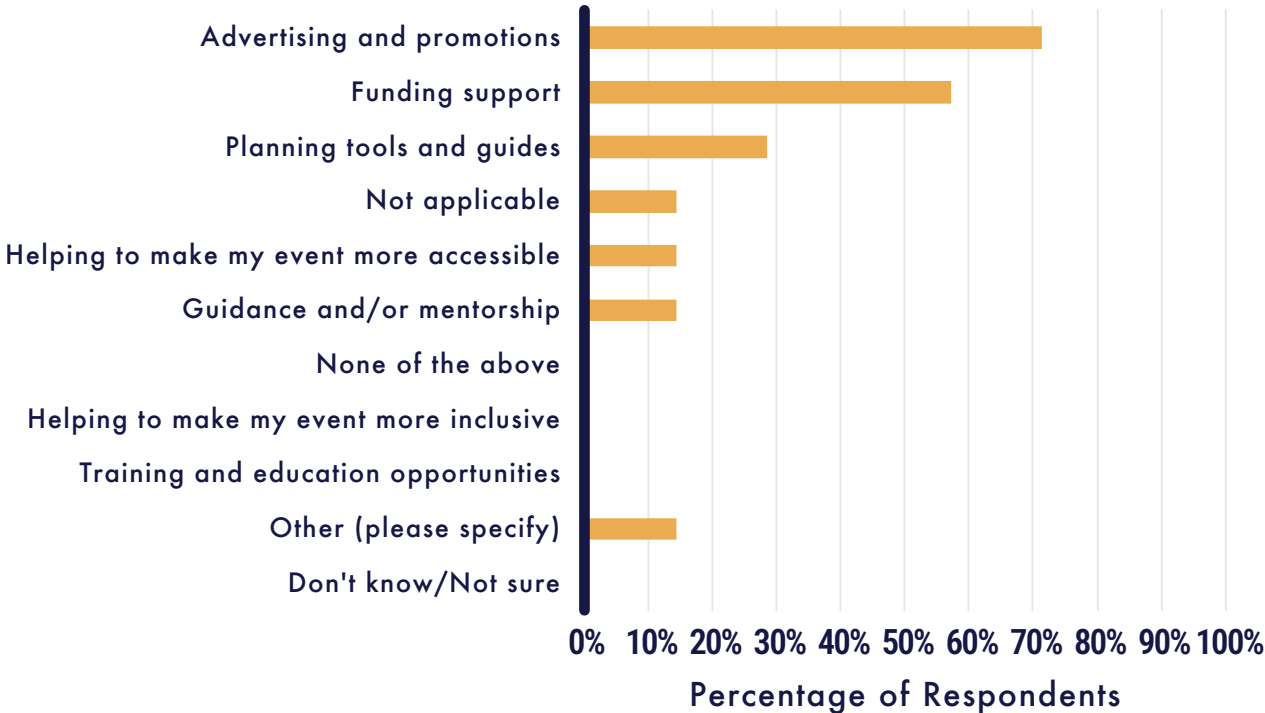


In which season(s) should East Gwillimbury consider adding more events?





If you were interested in hosting an event in East Gwillimbury, what assistance and/or resources would be the most helpful to you? Please select up to three options.



What is one thing that could be done to most improve events in East Gwillimbury?

Respondents identified the following most often:

- Larger venue.
- More ways to get communication.
- Expansion of activities in East Gwillimbury.

Community Group and Advisory Committee Input Workshops

Two community group and advisory committee input workshops were hosted on July 9 and July 16, 2024. 6 participants attended the workshops. The following summarizes the input received.



From the perspective of a community group or advisory committee, what is working well in regard to Town-run events hosted in East Gwillimbury?

- Events are well organized.
- Events have a good variety of activities.
- Appreciation that events are family oriented.
- Promotions are professional and simple.
- Support of the Town.



From the perspective of a community group or advisory committee, what could be improved in regard to Town-run events hosted in East Gwillimbury?

- More representation from East Gwillimbury farmers and businesses at the Farmers Market.
- Improving marketing and communications.
- Some events could have more activities for children (e.g., Music Nights).
- Ensuring activities at events target all age groups.
- More vendors at events.
- More cultural events.
- Revising the timing of the Farmers Market in June to attract more people.
- Permanent outdoor structure at the Farmers Market in case of bad weather.
- Communicating and promoting information around accessibility.
- The Town could provide more support to community groups in terms of coordination (e.g., organizing meetings, handling permitting, forms, etc.).
- Opportunity for the permitting process to be more straightforward.
- There are several Town departments organizations need to work with when planning events. It could be helpful to understand the purpose behind contacting specific departments.



What is one thing that could be done to most improve events in East Gwillimbury?

- Advertising and communications.
- Spending more on events to bring in more artists/musicians.
- Accessibility and community engagement.
- More ownership of the Town with community-led events.
- More structure and guidelines for community groups (e.g., packages that include templates and project plans).

Resident Input Workshop

One resident input workshop was hosted on July 17, 2024. 4 participants attended the workshop. The following summarizes the input received.



What is going well with Town-run events in East Gwillimbury?

- Marketing and advertising, specifically for the Farmers Market.
- Several events that cater to young families.
- Events are well attended.
- Timing of events work well for families.
- Lots of activities (e.g., photobooths, facepainting, skating, etc.).



What could be improved with Town-run events in East Gwillimbury?

- | | |
|--|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Events could cater to teens more. • Opportunity to add a farming event (e.g., Strawberry or Garlic Fest). • Opportunity to collaborate with neighbouring municipalities. • New events (e.g., movie nights, winter fest, golf day, volunteer recognition night). • Partnership opportunities. • More opportunities to connect with businesses to sponsor events. • There isn't one central spot for communicating events. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Opportunity for an events mobile, web app, or newsletters to promote events. • Opportunity for cross promotion between Town-run events and community events. • Opportunities for more relationship building between community groups and the Town. • Finding ways to connect with new residents and inform them of what events are happening. • More localized events (e.g., local parks). |
|--|--|

As we begin developing the Events Strategy for East Gwillimbury, what are the most important area(s) to focus on?

- Practices that consider the environmental impacts of events.
 - More opportunities to educate the community.
- Improving event venues/facilities.
 - More facilities to meet the needs of everyone and all demographics (young and old).
- Existing events could be strengthened.
 - Music Nights could run longer.
 - Themes at the Farmers Market
 - Registration component for Noon Years Eve.
- More collaboration between community groups and the Town.
- Communications and marketing.
- Looking at what other municipalities are doing.
- Gathering input from everyone (i.e., those who attend events and those who don't).

Extended Management Team Input Workshop

An Extended Management Team input workshop was hosted on July 11, 2024. 15 participants attended the workshop. The following summarizes the input received.

- | | |
|--|---|
| • Clarification needed on internal roles (i.e., which staff handle corporate Town events). | • Council should have a clear annual overview of events. |
| • Defining "community event." | • It works well to have parks and events within the same department. |
| • Clarifying who is responsible for delivering cultural events. | • Clearer identification of facility capacities for hosting events. |
| • Community event planners face barriers such as insurance and licenses. | • Operational impacts of events are significant for staff and resources. |
| • Need to mitigate late-minute requests for events. | • Criteria for levels of service should be established. |
| • Prioritization of financial resources for events is necessary. | • Town communication channels are busy and events are getting overlooked. |
| • Understanding resident support for potential tax increases to support more events. | • Explore other marketing opportunities to promote events. |
| • Determining the funding required for the Town's event team. | • Consideration of environmental impacts. |
| • Standardize procedures for event requests going to Council. | • Developing a policy for different event types. |

Town Staff Input Workshop

A Town Staff input workshop was hosted on July 16, 2024. 19 participants attended the workshop. The following summarizes the input received.

- Need to prepare for growth and ensure proper set up with resources.
- Ensure dedicated capacity to grow events.
- Massive uptake on existing events.
- Opportunities to combine events for better turnout.
- Important to define roles and responsibilities of staff.
- Staffing structure needed to support community events.
- It would be helpful to have a framework to differentiate community-led vs. Town run events.
- Larger and more visible outdoor event spaces are needed.
- Need a plan to regularly activate the new events street.
- Events create a large operational impact on departments.
- Demand for large events exceeds the capacity of existing buildings.
- There are parking and transportation challenges.
- Need a guide for making events as accessible as possible.
- Some community events face challenges raising sponsorship money.
- Extreme weather needs to be considered.
- Communication is important.
- Opportunity to centralize events.

Council Input

Three Council input workshops were hosted on July 23 and July 24, 2024. The following summarizes the input received.

- Opportunity to spread events throughout the community.
- There is an understanding that more staffing resources are needed to support event growth.
- Opportunity for smaller neighbourhood events.
- Opportunities to attract visitors through events.
- Strong appreciation for Music in the Park.
- Lack of local vendors at the Farmers Market.
- Need for more clarity on processes, roles, and information for decision making.
- Need to understand what events should be community driven and what events should be should be Town-run.
- Improvements could be made to communications.
- Need clarity on the purpose of events and whether they need to generate their own revenue.
- Appreciation for events staff.
- Need to ensure that events are inclusive to everyone.
- Events need to encourage community connection for newcomers.

In-Person Engagement

A member of the consulting team visited East Gwillimbury from July 22 to July 24, 2024 to conduct a community tour and collect in-person input. A staffed engagement station was set up on July 23, 2024 at Music in the Park to collect input from community members regarding their event needs. The station had table-top presentation boards where participants could “stick” their input onto the boards. The following summarizes the input received.

What is Going Well?		What Could Be Improved?	
• Music and Halloween • Good food • Good atmosphere • Easy to find • Free • I love the parking and easy access	• Love the staff’s enthusiasm • All of them (Halloween, Christmas, summer music, Santa Parade) • All the events are run extremely well • Like music nights (more budget for more nights)	• More winter events • Email blasts for inviting and reminding people of events • Car show nights • Using the Sharon Temple location • Maintenance (e.g., cutting the grass)	• More event shelters • Like the Farmers Market but it is not very visible • Strengthen communications

Appendix D – Event Evaluation Criteria

The following criteria can be used as a tool to assist the Town of East Gwillimbury in determining which community events to support. The first five are recommended to be considered mandatory criteria that an event must satisfy in order to receive support from the Town (highlighted in green). The remaining criteria can be used to further evaluate event opportunities and inform decision-making (highlighted in orange). Criteria 6 to 15 are not listed in a suggested order of priority and are not weighted. Evaluators may prioritize and weight these criteria in order to reflect particular priorities.

Scoring Chart

The following chart provides an example of how criteria could be scored.

0= clearly does not meet the description

1= somewhat meets the description

2= clearly meets the description

3= exceeds the description (new and innovative thinking is demonstrated)

	Criteria	Description
Mandatory Criteria	1. Physical Infrastructure Requirements	- The community has sufficient and appropriate infrastructure in place to successfully host and support the event (e.g. facilities, transportation, parking, etc.). - If additional infrastructure is required, it is feasible that the community could meet the requirements.
	2. Capacity of Event Producer	The event will be produced by an organization with strong capacity. The leadership, business acumen, experience, organizational structure, resources (human and financial), and other factors as appropriate, of the event producer instill confidence that the event will be a success.
	3. Accessibility	- The event demonstrates a high level of accessibility to the public. - All members of the community are encouraged to participate. - A universal design perspective is applied to event delivery.
	4. Political Affiliation	The event is non-partisan and will not be used to promote the political interests of any group, party, or individual.
	5. Risks	- Risks associated with the event are clearly identified and understood. Plans are in place to mitigate identified risks. The following risk areas should be considered: a. Financial b. Environmental c. Political d. Social e. Reputational f. Logistics and Safety
Additional Criteria	6. Inclusivity	- The event makes all members of the community feel welcome and does not promote one race, culture, religion, age, sex, sexual orientation, marital status, family status, or ability/disability over another. - The event is inclusive of all members of the community including newcomers. - Alcohol consumption is not a core focus of the event. - The event is free or low cost to attend. - An IDEAS lens is applied to event delivery.
	7. Human Resource Requirements	Development of the event will not put un-due stress on existing human resources, including the Town, community volunteers, and others as appropriate.

Scoring Chart

The following chart provides an example of how criteria could be scored.

0= clearly does not meet the description

1= somewhat meets the description

2= clearly meets the description

3= exceeds the description (new and innovative thinking is demonstrated)

Criteria		Description
Additional Criteria	8. Strategic Alignment	The event aligns with the strategic direction of the Town and other partners that may be involved.
	9. Calendar Management	- The event will enhance the community's overall calendar of events and not conflict with current Town-run events. - The event will not replicate or compete with similar events in nearby municipalities. - The event will enhance existing event offerings in the community and any potential negative impacts will be minimized.
	10. Reputation Enhancement and Community Awareness	The event will enhance the reputation and awareness of the Town of East Gwillimbury as a community that offers outstanding events.
	11. Partnerships and Support	The event supports opportunities for local partnerships (public and private) and demonstrates strong buy-in from partners.
	12. Community Engagement	- The community is supportive of hosting the event. - The event has the potential to activate multiple areas in the community. - The event promotes business/vendor engagement and supports the generation of complementary experiences offered by businesses.
	13. Community Impact	- The event will have minimal negative impacts to regular community programming or spontaneous use of publicly accessible assets. - The event has plans in place to minimize impacts to nearby residents.
	14. Environmental Impact	- The event will not negatively impact the environment. - The event organizer demonstrates commitment to environmentally sustainable event delivery practices.
	15. Market Demand	The event demonstrates community demand through relevant indicators (population projections, survey data, trends, etc.).
	16. Finances	- Expenses associated with hosting the event will be reasonable in relation to its revenue potential, expected return on investment, and overall economic impacts. - Expenses will not exceed the financial capacity of the partners involved. - The event should generate positive economic impacts for the Town and local businesses.

Appendix E – Event Services Matrix

The following matrix outlines the proposed services the Town could offer to different types of events.

Proposed Service Offerings	Town Events	Community Events	Private Events
Application and Permit Support	✓	✓	—
Event Production and Delivery	✓	—	—
Event Hosting Space Provision	✓	*	—
Funding Support (e.g. grants, sponsorships, etc.)	✓	*	—
Marketing and Promotion Support	✓	*	—
Planning Support (e.g. site plan, emergency and risk management plan, etc.).	✓	*	—
Logistical Support (e.g. garbage, security, traffic control, etc.)	✓	*	—
Evaluation	✓	*	—

*The Town may choose to offer these services if the proposed event is strongly aligned with its evaluation criteria.

Notes Regarding Private Events:

1. The Town could consider providing more service offerings to private events by charging a fee on a cost recovery basis.
2. The Town may consider providing enhanced, one-time services and/or funding to private events if they are anticipated to bring considerable value to the broader community (e.g. sport tourism events, conferences, etc.). However, the Town is encouraged to recover costs wherever feasible. Requests for enhanced support for private events could go to Council for decision.

Event Definitions

Town Events – These include all events directly delivered by Town staff. The events have broad-based appeal and community-wide inclusivity. Town Events may also include those organized by Working Groups of Council or Community Groups of Council.

Community Run Events – These include events that have broad based appeal and community wide inclusivity and are delivered by members of the community, organizations, businesses, and individuals. Town staff assist through SEAT (as recommended in this strategy), which includes the permitting process and policy, bylaw and permitting compliance. Examples include Sports Day and Sharon Temple Canada Day.

Private Events – These include events that are organized by members of the community, businesses, or organizations, but they are not open to the community to attend. Examples include weddings, graduations, year end parties.

Appendix F – Event Space Location Criteria

The following are criteria that can be used to assess the location of new event spaces.

1. Capacity

- Capacity of the site to accommodate all desired event supporting amenities.

2. Site Accessibility and Visibility

- Prominence and ease of access, including location on a major route and visibility. Access by bike, transit, and walking should also be considered.

3. Site Availability and Potential Cost of Development

- Confirmation of whether the site can feasibly be acquired.
- Potential cost to service and develop the site and desired event supporting amenities.

4. Proximity to Population and Recreation Areas

- The extent to which the site supports ease of access from residents in the region, through being either centrally located within the Town or centrally located within one of the Town's communities.

5. Site Distribution

- The extent to which the site contributes to the distribution of event spaces across the municipality.

6. Site Synergies

- Opportunities for partnerships to serve event space users and residents.

7. Operations and Revenue Generation

- Considerations that may affect event space operations (e.g. municipal operational efficiencies, potential revenue streams from event hosting, etc.).

Appendix G – Implementation Plan

The Town’s Parks, Recreation and Culture Department will take the lead in implementing the strategy. The action plan is divided into sub-sections, which include:

Organizational Development.....	90
Event and Program Development.....	93
Performance Measures	99

Action items were formulated based on input from the community, findings from the consultant assessment, results of the comparative analysis, and best practices. Completing the action plan will drive the Town of East Gwillimbury towards its vision for events.

Each action item has been assigned a suggested priority rating, estimated cost, and anticipated timeline for implementation.

Priority

- High Priority (H)
- Medium Priority (M)

Implementation Timeline

- Short Term (S) 1 – 2 years
- Medium Term (M) 3 – 5 years
- Long Term (L) 6 – 10 years

Cost Criteria

- Low Cost (L) Less than \$10,000
- Medium Cost (M) \$10,000 - \$50,000
- High Cost (H) More than \$50,000
- Staff Time Action will require use of existing staff resources

Quick Wins



A blue star indicates than an action item is a “Quick Win.” Quick wins are actions that can be implemented within a year or two, have a high probability of success and have relatively low cost.

Future Planning, Evaluation, and Reporting

A key component of the success of this strategy will be the evaluation of its initiatives. The action plan should be reviewed bi-annually, at which time priorities should be re-evaluated and a discussion of any variances should occur in reference to key performance indicators (KPI’s). If new projects are added (or old projects removed) as the plan progresses, this should be done by weighing the relative priority of all projects in the plan. The action plan should be updated on a yearly basis; therefore, the third quarter evaluation period will set the stage for the updated version of the plan. In the fourth quarter, the updated plan should be formalized, and a draft approved by the end of the year. It is further recommended that the entire strategy be updated in year five of implementation.

Implementation Considerations

The action plan identifies several initiatives and action items. Attempting to complete all of them concurrently will stretch the resources and limit the focus of the organization as it implements the plan. Therefore, it is recommended that implementation begin with the highest priority items.

It should be recognized that this strategy is a non-statutory plan whose purpose is to provide direction and guidance. Implementation may be impacted by a variety of factors, including Council priorities, available resources, and emerging opportunities/challenges.

1. Organizational Development

Initiatives		Action Items	Priority	Timeline	Cost
A. Establish a One Door In Approach and Clarify Roles	1.A.1 ★	Establish a 'one-door-in' approach for events under which all event related requests sent to the Town are directed to a single point of contact.	High	1-2 years	Low
	1.A.2	Clarify internal roles and responsibilities, update job descriptions, and develop process maps for event development.	High	1-2 years	Low
	1.A.3 ★	Formalize policies, procedures, and processes related to Town-run and community-run events.	High	1-2 years	Low
B. Adopt Criteria to Evaluate Events	1.B.1 ★	Adopt a set of criteria to assist in determining which events merit investment by the Town.	High	1-2 years	Low
C. Implement an Event Services Matrix	1.C.1	Develop and implement an Event Services Matrix to assist the Town in determining what level of involvement and support the Town will provide for different types of event organizers.	High	1-2 years	Low
D. Consider Adding Additional Human Resources to Support Events	1.D.1	Consider adding human resources with a phased-in approach to increase capacity of the Town and community to deliver events.	High	1-2 years	High
	1.D.2	Evaluate human resource needs annually and adjust staff complement to respond to community needs.	Medium	Ongoing	Low
E. Establish a Special Events Advisory Team	1.E.1	Establish a Special Events Advisory Team (SEAT).	High	1-2 years	Low/Staff Time

Initiatives		Action Items	Priority	Timeline	Cost
F. Clarify Council Advisory Committee Roles and Processes	1.F.1 ★	Provide each Advisory Committee of Council, Community Groups of Council, and/or Working Groups of Council with direction to: a. Provide only advice to Council as to what events the Town should host each year well in advance of the budgeting process. b. Prior to the reporting process, consult with the Parks, Recreation and Culture Department to make them aware of requests and seek feedback on potential event delivery dates/schedules, identify resource requests, and budget requirements. c. Ensure the event request fits with the overall priorities and decision making criteria as identified in the Events Strategy. d. Submit event requests to be considered for resourcing during the Town's annual budgeting process.	High	Ongoing	Low/Staff Time
	1.F.2 ★	Provide each Community Group of Council and/or Working Group of Council with direction to: a. Consult with the Parks, Recreation and Culture Department to coordinate event delivery dates/schedules, identify any resource requests of the Town, and determine if the event request fits with the overall priorities and decision making criteria identified in the Events Strategy. b. Report out annually with the budget process all events that will be held by the group for Council approval. Follow up with the Parks, Recreation and Culture Department after budget approval to schedule resources and event requirements.	High	Ongoing	Low/Staff Time
	1.F.3	In order to retain connection to the community in relation to arts and culture events moving forward, it is recommended the Arts and Culture Advisory Committee remain in-tact with a primary mandate of providing advice to Council and staff. Events should be led by Town staff unless Council determines that a specific event be led by the Committee. This aligns with the Health and Active Living Master Plan which identifies development of an Arts and Culture Advisory Committee as a key priority.	High	Ongoing	Low/Staff Time

Initiatives	Action Items	Priority	Timeline	Cost
G. Enhance Volunteer Capacity	1.G.1 Build on the Town's existing Engaged EG volunteer program to improve the capacity of volunteers to support events, increase the diversity of volunteers and to increase the number of volunteers at events.	Medium	3-5 years	Low
	1.G.2 Enhance and implement new strategies to retain and engage volunteers such as appreciation events, regular communication, rewards and training.	Medium	3-5 years	Medium
	1.G.3 Consider using volunteer management software tools to help streamline volunteer coordination.	Medium	3-5 years	Medium
H. Improve Evaluation and Reporting of Town-Run Events	1.H.1 Measure the social, economic, and environmental ROI of Town-run events. The attached performance measures, and other measures as appropriate, can be used to benchmark year to year performance.	High	Ongoing	Staff Time
	1.H.2 Share ROI information with Town Council, management, senior administration, sponsors, and grant funding partners.	High	Ongoing	Staff Time
	1.H.3 Conduct post-event surveys for Town-run events to collect data from participants including questions to gather feedback on opportunities for improvement.	Medium	Ongoing	Medium
	1.H.4 Conduct a community-wide survey on a two- or three-year cycle to gauge overall resident satisfaction with Town-run events in East Gwillimbury.	Medium	Ongoing	Medium
	1.H.5 Implement a measurement and reporting framework for all Town staff who contribute toward Town-run event planning and delivery so that the full amount of municipal human resource investment can be tracked.	Medium	Ongoing	Staff Time
I. Ongoing and Future Planning	1.I.1 In year five of implementation, formally review and update the Events Strategy. Adjust as necessary and chart a course for the next 5 years.	Medium	6-10 years	Medium

2. Event and Program Development

Initiatives	Action Items	Priority	Timeline	Cost
A. Enhance the Capacity of Community Organizations to Deliver Events	2.A.1 ★ Develop and communicate a clear process for planning and delivery of community-run events.	High	1-2 years	Staff Time
	2.A.2 ★ Improve information available online for event organizers including information about permits, licenses, approval requirements, funding opportunities, and related policies and procedures.	High	1-2 years	Low
	2.A.3 ★ Develop resources that community organizations can use to plan and promote their events such as checklists, templates, and resource guides.	High	1-2 years	Low
	2.A.4 Identify ways to reduce barriers for community groups to host events, including examining fees, permitting, marketing, and funding.	Medium	3-5 years	Staff Time
	2.A.5 Consider offering facility rental fee waivers or discounts to incentivize event development from the community.	Medium	3-5 years	Low/Medium
	2.A.6 Host an annual Community-Run Event Forum.	Medium	Ongoing	Low
B. Encourage More Small-scale Events at Parks Across East Gwillimbury	2.B.1 ★ Consider using additional distributed approaches for Town-run events.	Medium	3-5 years	Low to High
	2.B.2 Develop tools for residents and organizations to plan and deliver events in their communities. Consider creating a 'Block Party in a Box' that includes games, BBQs and other resources for fun and easy event programming.	Medium	3-5 years	Low/Medium
C. Develop a Community Events Grant Program	2.C.1 Develop a Community Events Grant Program and identify potential funding sources to support it.	High	1-2 years	Medium/High
D. Enhance Event Marketing	2.D.1 Phase in an Events Marketing and Revenue position with a focus on revenue generation as an off-set to the operating costs for the position.	Medium	1-2 years	Medium
	2.D.2 Develop an annual marketing plan for Town-run events.	Medium	1-2 years	Low/Staff Time
	2.D.3 Consider creating marketing and communication channels specifically for events.	Medium	3-5 years	Low/Medium

Initiatives	Action Items	Priority	Timeline	Cost
	2.D.4 ★ Promote vendors and sponsors as part of event marketing activities.	Medium	Ongoing	Staff Time
E. Enhance Diversity and Inclusion in Event Delivery	2.E.1 Encourage representation from people of diverse backgrounds on event-related committees and working groups.	High	Ongoing	Low
	2.E.2 Look for ways to align event delivery with the Town's Indigeneity, Inclusion, Diversity, Equity and Accessibility (IIDEA) Action Plan.	High	3-5 years	Low
	2.E.3 Create a guide for staff and community members who organize events, including accessibility of event spaces, communications, registration, flyer design, social media posts, and other relevant components.	Medium	1-2 years	Low
	2.E.4 Encourage community organizations to deliver open and welcoming community-run events that showcase and share cultural traditions with all East Gwillimbury residents.	Medium	Ongoing	Low
	2.E.5 Partner with local organizations and cultural groups, such as the Georgina Island First Nation and Black Community Organizations, to attract and retain volunteers with diverse backgrounds to ensure volunteer programs are inclusive and accessible to all residents.	Medium	Ongoing	Low
	2.E.6 Engage staff and residents on IIDEA dates of significance through events such as National Indigenous Peoples Day, Pride Month, Black History Month, Newcomer Welcome Week, and Asian History Month.	Medium	Ongoing	Low
F. Fully Leverage the Health and Active Living Plaza to Support Events	2.F.1 Develop a Special Event Plan for the HALP.	High	1-2 years	Medium/High
	2.F.2 Develop an Animation Plan for the HALP.	Medium	3-5 years	Medium/High
	2.F.3 Support events that focus on Health and Active Living opportunities.	Medium	3-5 years	Low/Medium
	2.F.4 Expand partnership programming and events with the Health and Active Living Plaza Partners.	Medium	3-5 years	Low/Medium

Initiatives	Action Items	Priority	Timeline	Cost
G. Plan to Add New Outdoor Event Amenities in Parks	2.G.1 Consider future event needs and facilities in municipal planning (land use, facility design, transportation infrastructure, service level decisions).	Medium	Ongoing	Low
	2.G.2 Work with developers during the planning and construction stages of new neighbourhoods and communities to ensure parks have amenities that support events (e.g. washrooms, electrical hook ups, pathways, seating areas, and shade structures).	Medium	Ongoing	Low
	2.G.3 Incorporate climate and extreme weather risk management into the design of event hosting facilities.	Medium	Ongoing	Medium/High
	2.G.4 Continue collaboration between the Town's parks and events teams to incorporate event supporting infrastructure into park improvement and construction projects.	Medium	Ongoing	Low
	2.G.5 Adopt a set of criteria for acquiring new land for event spaces. See Appendix F.	Medium	3-5 years	Low
H. Enhance and Evolve Existing Town-Run Events	2.H.1 Consider a pilot to combine Music Nights and the Farmers Market.	Medium	1-2 years	Low/Medium
	2.H.2 Set a goal to renew a certain percentage of event-related programming each year to ensure community events continue to excite and delight participants.	Medium	Ongoing	Low
	2.H.3 Explore opportunities to enhance programming/activities at events that cater towards youth interests.	Medium	Ongoing	Low
	2.H.4 Review existing events to consider how they can be made more accessible and inclusive.	Medium	Ongoing	Low
	2.H.5 Consider engaging with other municipalities in the region to align municipally-run event offerings and maximize local participation.	Medium	3-5 years	Low
I. Develop New Events	2.I.1 Consider creating a new event that reflects the agricultural heritage of East Gwillimbury and the ongoing rural character of many of its communities.	Medium	3-5 years	Medium
	2.I.2 Develop plans to introduce new events that respond to resident demand, particularly for demographics that may be underserved such as youth/teens and seniors.	Medium	Ongoing	Medium

Initiatives	Action Items	Priority	Timeline	Cost
	2.I.3 Consider new events that support and reflect the interests and needs of marginalized and equity-deserving groups, including Indigenous, Black, racialized persons, the 2SLGBTQIA+ community, disabled persons/persons with disabilities, and minoritized faith groups.	Medium	Ongoing	Low to High
	2.I.4 Integrate IIDEA Action Plan initiatives into the creation of new events.	Medium	Ongoing	Low to High
J. Support Vendor Participation in Town-Run Events	2.J.1 Prioritize support for local area vendors and identify ways to reduce barriers for vendors to participate in events.	Medium	1-2 years	Staff Time
	2.J.2 Involve potential vendors in the early stages of planning for new and existing events to ensure their operational and business needs, and the needs of their customers, are met.	Medium	3-5 years	Low
	2.J.3 Integrate IIDEA Action Plan initiatives as it relates to supporting vendor participation.	Medium	Ongoing	Low
K. Support Sustainable Event Delivery	2.K.1 Implement the Town's forthcoming Sustainable Event Strategy as events are planned and delivered.	Medium	3-5 years	Low
	2.K.2 Develop criteria to ensure that events are directed to/held in facilities that can adequately accommodate them to limit inappropriate use or excessive wear and tear on municipal infrastructure.	Medium	3-5 years	Low
	2.K.3 Implement the Event Sponsorship Policy.	Medium	Ongoing	Low
L. Consider Linkages to Tourism	2.L.1 Consider working with local organizations and businesses to explore the development of tourism related events that build on the agricultural heritage of East Gwillimbury.	Medium	3-5 years	Low
	2.L.2 Consider the tourism potential of existing Town-run events and identify ways to enhance their appeal to visitors.	Medium	3-5 years	Low
	2.L.3 Consider engaging with regional organizations to identify ways to leverage existing assets and work together to develop and market events.	Medium	3-5 years	Low

Initiatives	Action Items	Priority	Timeline	Cost
	2.L.4 Encourage event producers and local tourism businesses and organizations to develop pre/during/post event experience packages to entice eventgoers to stay longer, do more, and spend more in East Gwillimbury.	Medium	3-5 years	Low
	2.L.5 Consider providing resources and supports to encourage residents to host their friends and family during events (e.g. trip planning tools, ambassador programs, VFR packages, how-to-host tip sheets).	Medium	6-10 years	Low/Medium
	2.L.6 Encourage businesses to offer promotions and incentives to eventgoers in order to draw visitors into the community and multiply their impact.	Medium	Ongoing	Staff Time
	2.L.7 Considering ways that IIDEA initiatives and focuses can increase and encourage tourism.	Medium	Ongoing	Staff Time

Top 10 Actions

The following actions have been identified as top priorities. They are activities with the most potential to advance the vision and outcomes of this events strategy. It is expected that the Town would implement them as resources allow. They are listed in a recommended order of priority.

- 

1.

Establish a ‘one-door-in’ approach for events at the Town and clarify internal roles and responsibilities related to event delivery.
- 

2.

Adopt a set of criteria to assist in determining which events merit investment by the Town.
- 

3.

Implement an event services matrix to assist the Town in determining what level of involvement and support the Town will provide to different types of event organizers.
- 

4.

Consider adding human resources to increase capacity of the Town and community to deliver events, using a priority focused and phased-in approach.
- 

5.

Establish a Special Events Advisory Team (SEAT).
- 

6.

Develop a community events grant program.
- 

7.

Encourage more small-scale events at parks across East Gwillimbury through program elements like “Block Party in a Box” and outdoor facility enhancements.
- 

8.

Develop a Special Event Plan for the HALP.
- 

9.

Enhance diversity and inclusion in event delivery, including integration of IIDEA Action Plan projects and initiatives.
- 

10.

Implement the Town’s forthcoming Sustainable Event Strategy as events are planned and delivered.

Performance Measures

Focus Area for Growth	KPI	Measurement Tool
1. Social	1.1 At least 80% of residents are satisfied with community events.	Resident survey
	1.2 85% great rating with quality of event experiences.	Resident survey
	1.3 10% of programming at each community event is refreshed each year.	Program plans
	1.4 Event programming is diverse enough to appeal to a broad range of ages and interests.	Program plans
	1.5 85% of event attendees report feeling welcome at events.	Resident survey
	1.6 85% of event attendees report that events are accessible to them.	Resident survey
	1.7 Event participants are demographically diverse.	Surveys
	1.8 New events complement, rather than compete, with existing events.	Event calendar
	1.9 Events are dispersed across the Town's communities.	Event plans
2. Economic	2.1 Events are achieving cost recovery targets.	Event budgets
	2.2 5% annual increase in event-related revenues.	Event budgets
	2.3 Increased sponsor engagement in events.	Event budgets
	2.4 Increased vendor participation in events.	Event plans/audits
	2.5 Events do not negatively impact the ability of the Town to deliver core services.	Annual reports
	2.6 5% annual growth in number of event attendees.	Attendance estimator tool
	2.7 10% annual increase in the number of community organizations delivering events.	Event calendar
3. Environmental	3.1 Events do not negatively impact natural areas.	Event audit
	3.2 Events do not negatively impact infrastructure.	Event audit
	3.3 All event producers implement sustainability measures.	Event audit

Appendix H – References

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