

# 2023-2026

Waikato Business Events Strategy

Executive Summary



**The Mighty  
Waikato**  
New Zealand

# Foreword

**Nicola Greenwell**  
Chief Executive Officer  
Hamilton & Waikato Tourism



## Business events are mighty important for the Waikato

**With state-of-the-art venues, world-leading experiences and know-how, the Waikato has what it takes to attract valuable business events.**

As New Zealand's leading regional business events destination, our region has established a stellar reputation for being able to draw in and successfully stage business events – and other types of major events too.

Now, as we all start to move on from the COVID-19 pandemic and event restrictions, it is pleasing to see that once again we are receiving strong demand from meeting and conference organisers, as well as incentive buyers.

In fact, Q2 2023 BEDP data shows the Waikato business events market share is third only to Auckland and Wellington

Business events will play a crucial role in leading the economic and social revival of our region, providing the obvious direct benefits for those involved in planning and executing them, and for the suppliers – hospitality providers, including accommodation and food and beverage, as well as tourism businesses, and retailers.

It is important to consider the many ways business events deliver value, including employment opportunities, as well as helping to create knowledge, providing

opportunities for exchange, and they can work to attract trade, investment, and talent too.

Often attending a business event prompts delegates to visit again to enjoy leisure activities with family and friends.

This Waikato Business Events Strategy 2023-2026 is a blueprint for the considered growth of our business events sector over the next three years, and lays ground work for the longer term too.

It has been developed by Hamilton & Waikato Tourism, together with industry leaders and key stakeholders.

Our intention is to further elevate the Waikato's stature as a business destination by supporting our partners to attract, host and leverage business events, essentially to build back even better.

We will continue to facilitate connections, provide sector leadership and promotion of Waikato as a business destination.

In essence, the strategy provides a framework and a set of priorities and initiatives for our sector to rally around so that even greater economic, cultural and social benefits can be generated for the businesses and communities in our region.





# Introduction

**The Waikato's prime location, award-winning venues and a reputation for consistently delivering exceptional event experiences have established it as New Zealand's leading regional business events destination.**

The Waikato Business Events Strategy 2023 - 2026 sets out the region's strategic direction as a business events destination through to 2026. Developed by Hamilton & Waikato Tourism in partnership with industry leaders and key stakeholders, and informed by regional and national strategic plans, the Strategy promotes a collaborative approach to maintaining and enhancing the Waikato's standing as a leading business events destination.

With the COVID-19 pandemic hitting the business events sector particularly hard, supporting industry partners to 'build back better' is critical to maximising domestic opportunities and effectively reconnecting Waikato with the world.

More broadly, the Strategy aims to maximise the role played by business events in accelerating the region's immediate recovery and supporting longer-term prosperity through profiling of key sectors, facilitating knowledge creation and exchange, and assisting in the attraction of external investment.

Moving forward, the race to recapture lost value, reductions in business event budgets and the

opening of purpose-built venue infrastructure in Auckland, Wellington and Christchurch are likely to further intensify competition.

To compete, the Waikato must effectively exploit its strengths as a business events destination to take advantage of identified opportunities, while continuing to overcome internal challenges, such as a lack of large scale accommodation.

Within this context, the Strategy provides a collective mission for the region to rally around, with efforts focused around a set of strategic priorities and associated key initiatives.

Successful implementation of the Strategy relies on effective collaboration between Hamilton & Waikato Tourism, industry partners and key stakeholders, with each playing to their strengths to maximise collective outcomes.

# What is a Business Event?

Business events take place everyday at venues across the Waikato. The Business Events Data Programme (BEDP) defines a business event as any MICE event (meeting, incentive, convention, exhibition) hosted in a business event venue and attended by at least 50 people.

## Types of Business Events:

- **Meeting or Seminar**  
A formal gathering of people to discuss matters of shared interest, usually within a single session
- **Incentive**  
An event designed to incentivise or reward people for exceptional business achievement that will generally be part of a larger programme of activities
- **Conference (or Convention / Congress / Symposium)**  
A formal gathering of people to discuss matters of shared interest involving multiple sessions and speakers
- **Exhibition (or Trade Show)**  
A showcase of goods and services held for the benefit of a specific industry or interest group





# The Value of Business Events

In addition to attracting high value visitors to the Waikato, business events facilitate knowledge creation and exchange, and play an important role in attracting trade, external investment and talent.

Delegate's daily spend is typically twice that of a leisure visitor, with many traveling around the region before and/or after the event, potentially with other family members.

Business events provide delegates with the opportunity to discover a vibrant destination, increasing the potential for repeat visitation and further economic benefit, as well as building pride of place among local businesses and residents.

In addition to the direct economic benefits for those involved in planning and producing business events, downstream suppliers also indirectly benefit, as do hospitality providers, retailers and tourism operators.

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Business events are critical to New Zealand's recovery...these events play an important role in enriching New Zealand both economically and in delivering broader societal and knowledge benefits.

**//** Stephen England-Hall | Former CEO, Tourism New Zealand



# Regional Business Events Leadership

Hamilton & Waikato Tourism provides impartial leadership for the sector, setting the strategic direction for the region and leading its implementation.

Hamilton & Waikato Tourism's primary function is the promotion of the Waikato as a business events destination of choice, creating demand and supporting partners' efforts to attract, develop and retain business events.

The team facilitates connections across and beyond the sector, promoting collaboration to maximise regional outcomes, in addition to providing partners with relevant and up-to-date market information and insights.

Working with partners and the community to build a more agile, resilient and regenerative region is a priority for Hamilton & Waikato Tourism as the region aims to emerge stronger from the COVID-19 pandemic.

Hamilton & Waikato Tourism operates under a private-public partnership model, with core council funding supplemented by industry partner contributions.

The role of Hamilton & Waikato Tourism is to:

- Provide impartial sector leadership
- Support industry partners to attract, host and leverage business events
- Promote the Waikato as a business events destination of choice
- Facilitate connections and capability opportunities, and champions sector collaboration to maximise regional outcomes



# Key Partners

## Hamilton & Waikato Tourism

Hamilton & Waikato Tourism (HWT) is the official tourism organisation for the Hamilton and Waikato Region. Their role is to develop and promote the city and region as an attractive destination to international and domestic visitors, media, travel trade and the business events sector to support the overall sustainability of the region's communities.

## Councils

As the regulatory and policy units of local government, councils fund Hamilton & Waikato Tourism to promote the region. Councils also own and manage visitor assets, including event venues and supporting infrastructure.

## Hamilton & Waikato Tourism Partners

Local industry operators who partner with Hamilton & Waikato Tourism on an annual basis to support regional marketing and promotional initiatives.

## Te Waka

Te Waka is the Economic Development Agency for the wider Waikato region, working in partnership with iwi, business, government and community organisations to achieve sustainable economic growth and improve community well-being.

## Industry Operators

Local, national and international operators and influencers including venue owners and managers, accommodation and transport providers, and conference and event organisers.

## Iwi

Waikato-Tainui is the principal iwi of the Waikato region, representing over 76,000 iwi members and 68 marae. Tainui Group Holdings is commercial arm of Waikato-Tainui, owning and operating various investments within the Waikato region, including several accommodation assets.

Ngāti Maniapoto are very much aligned to the goal of achieving cultural and social wellbeing, environmental sustainability, and economic growth. They have a distinct Maniapoto way of planning and developing business opportunities that provide benefits back to the broader community.

## Waikato Tertiary Institutions

As thought leaders, the University of Waikato, The New Zealand Institute of Skills and Technology (Te Pūkenga), and Te Wānanga o Aotearoa attract, host and develop business events that positively profile key sectors and support their ongoing development.

## Chambers of Commerce

Chambers of Commerce works with local and national communities to support and represent the collective voice of Waikato business.

## Waikato Residents

The continued engagement and support of residents for the region's business events programme is critical to Waikato maintaining and enhancing its standing as a leading business events destination and maximising community outcomes.

## Tourism New Zealand

Via their dedicated business events function, Hamilton & Waikato Tourism works with Tourism New Zealand to promote the Waikato as a business events destination, develop off-shore relationships, identify and support event opportunities, connect local operators and maximise outcomes.

## Industry Bodies

Hamilton & Waikato Tourism is a member of multiple industry bodies including Business Events Industry Aotearoa (BEIA) and New Zealand Convention Bureaux (NZCB) that provide advocacy, education, and lead generation to members.



# Case Study: Water New Zealand Conference

## Water New Zealand kept coming back to the Waikato.

**Although New Zealand's longest awa, the mighty Waikato River, flows through the region from the mountains to the sea, Water New Zealand's decision to stage eight of its annual conferences in the Waikato over the past decade was far from simply symbolic.**

From the outset of the first conference held in Kirikiriroa Hamilton in 2013 through to the subsequent conferences including the Water New Zealand Conference and Expo 2021 event which was postponed to May 2022 due to COVID-19, Water New Zealand found that the Waikato has everything it takes to stage highly successful gatherings – from the facilities and infrastructure to the experience, the dedication, and the pizzazz.

Water New Zealand's chief executive, Gillian Blythe, says with around 900 attendees and 400 exhibitors the organisation's conferences are huge.

"We've found that Claudelands Conference and Exhibition Centre has been able to meet all our needs. It is in a great location and one of the few venues in the country that can cater for such a large, multi-faceted event."

Water New Zealand, together with its conference organiser, Avenues Events Management, worked hand-in-glove with the centre's team of highly skilled professionals and its exclusive catering partner, Montana Food and Events.

Each conference spread over three days with pre-conference workshops included in the programmes that covered presentations and discussions on topics like thought leadership, drinking water, pipelines, wastewater treatment and climate change.

Gillian says a major feature of the Water New Zealand Conference is the many exhibition stands where a lot of mingling and business also takes place.

"With more than 400 exhibitors across 180 exhibition stands, the Claudelands space is ideal for displaying large pieces of equipment and product.

"As well, the outdoor area with plenty of parking makes packing in and out an easy and simple task for our exhibitors."

Business events like the Water New Zealand Conference provide highly valuable benefits for Hamilton and the wider Waikato region.

Included are the direct economic benefits for the businesses planning and implementing the events while hospitality providers, including accommodation, eateries and bars, also benefit, as do the tourism businesses that get involved.

Local employment opportunities are created too. Then there are the downstream benefits for other businesses including retail and the likes of petrol stations when delegates drive as many do, especially from the major Auckland market. Direct air links to other parts of the country, including Wellington and Christchurch, also mean ready access to the region.

Generally, people attending business events like the Water New Zealand Conference also spend more in a region, making them especially valuable visitors for the local economy.



It is estimated that each person attending the Water New Zealand Conference in May 2022 spent \$418 during the three-day event. Based on this the economic benefit generated for the Waikato by the 1,300 or so delegates and exhibitors attending was in the realm of \$543,000.

Along with the direct and indirect economic benefits, business events often also bring to local communities additional learning opportunities and connections, and cultural exchange.



# A Great Place to do Business

**An agricultural powerhouse with an increasingly diverse economy, the Waikato is a place of powerful possibilities.**

As one of the most productive regions in New Zealand, the Waikato's prime location and diverse economy are a springboard for innovation and growth.

Home to one of the world's most productive primary agricultural sectors, the region's abundance of fertile land has enabled the Waikato to thrive as a dairy production powerhouse, earning a reputation as a food basket for New Zealand and the world.

Primary industries are supported by robust sectors in technology and high-value manufacturing, while the Waikato is one of the country's fastest growing tech sectors, with agri-tech in particular growing at an exponential rate.

Significant investment in supporting infrastructure, such as the Ruakura Superhub, which will be New Zealand's largest integrated commercial hub upon completion, will further improve the competitiveness of key sectors, create thousands of jobs and deliver significant social and economic benefits.

The Waikato also continues to be successful in attracting new businesses, with Rabobank relocating its headquarters to Hamilton, and the \$1 billion Te Awa Lakes project which, once completed, will feature 2500 new dwellings and accommodate some 4000 residents, as well as support numerous retail, commercial and recreation attractions.

Working with Te Waka - Waikato's regional economic development agency, Hamilton & Waikato Tourism supports key sector organisations across the region to attract, host and leverage business events.

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Hamilton has a real can-do attitude in business and I like that...we feel we are now ideally positioned to support our clients and to further grow our New Zealand business.

 Todd Charteris | CEO, Rabobank New Zealand

# Business Events Showcase the Waikato's Key Sectors



## Agriculture

The Waikato produces more than 25% of New Zealand's milk supply. Our land is highly productive and fertile, and our expertise in pasture-based management systems is world renowned.



## Manufacturing

Manufacturing is a diverse, innovative and vitally important part of Waikato's economy – it is our second-largest contributor to regional GDP after the agriculture sector and employs almost 25,000 people.



## Construction

There is a strong construction pipeline in the Waikato with building consents, roading infrastructure developments and housing projects on the rise.



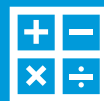
## Logistics

The Waikato's location at the heart of the upper North Island means it is perfectly placed to serve the golden triangle of Tauranga and Auckland. The development of the inland ports at Horotiu and Ruakura provides significant scope for further growth.



## Information Technology

New Zealand's first international internet connection was established in 1989 from The University of Waikato. Today, more than 50 information technology companies in the region serve customers in software programming, support and decision-making tools.



## Education

Our region is proud to be home to many leading education providers across all educational levels, with the education sector continuing to grow and provide offerings for international students.



## Healthcare

Healthcare is the second largest employer in the Waikato, with 6 public hospitals. With increased societal focus on health and longer lifespans, the role of the healthcare sector is expected to continue to grow.



## High-Performance Sport

Waikato is the training ground for many of New Zealand's elite athletes and coaches, with Lake Karapiro, the Grassroots Trust Velodrome, and University of Waikato's Centre for High Performance providing world-class facilities.



# Why the Waikato?

Centrally located, with award-winning venues, unique attractions, and a track record for delivering exceptional event experiences, the Waikato is New Zealand's leading regional business events destination.



## Well-Connected

Centrally positioned in the heart of the upper North Island, the Waikato is located on a nationally significant infrastructure corridor, and is part of the 'golden triangle' connecting Waikato - Bay of Plenty - Auckland.



## Thriving Industry Sectors

The Waikato is home to one of the world's most productive primary agricultural sectors. The region's primary industries are supported by robust sectors in technology and high-value manufacturing.



## A Proven Performer

The Waikato is an established business events destination with the capability and experience to consistently deliver exceptional event experiences across a range of award-winning venues.



## Uniquely Waikato

The diversity of the Waikato region provides endless options for delegates, from long unspoilt beaches and a thriving metropolitan city, to the unique underground wonders of Waitomo Glowworm Caves, and Hobbiton™ Movie Set Middle-earth movie magic.



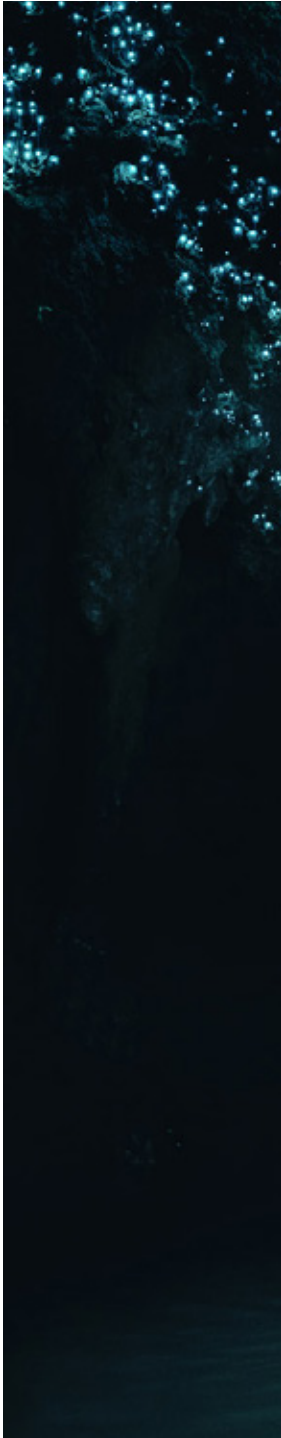
## Cost Competitive without Compromising Quality

As New Zealand's leading regional business events destination, Waikato is able offer all the benefits of a major centre without the prohibitive cost profile.



## A Culturally Rich and Diverse Region

The story of Waikato is also the story of Kīngitanga (Māori King Movement), formed to unite Māori tribes throughout New Zealand in defence of their land and independence, with the official residence of the current Māori monarch located in Ngāruawāhia.





The diversity of the Waikato region provides endless options for delegates

# Current State of Play

The Waikato is well-placed to build on its position as New Zealand's leading regional business events destination, provided accommodation and workforce challenges can be overcome.

- **Leading Regional Destination**

The Waikato remains New Zealand's leading regional business events destination, with current and pre-COVID-19 reporting consistently ranking the region behind only Auckland, Wellington and Canterbury across all key metrics.

- **Intensifying Competition**

Reduced budgets, new purpose-built facilities in main centres, increased prioritisation of business events by regional markets, and the race to recapture lost market value are all likely to make a challenging market even more challenging.

- **Location, Location, Location**

The Waikato's location at the heart of the upper North Island and as part of the 'golden triangle', connecting Hamilton, Tauranga and Auckland is a key factor in the Waikato's appeal as a business events destination, with significant recent investment in roading and communications infrastructure making the region well placed to capitalise.

- **Strength of Key Sectors**

The Waikato's status as a global agricultural powerhouse and strength in manufacturing, logistics, professional services and other sectors of significance is critical to the region's ability to successfully attract, develop and retain business event content.

- **Award-Winning Venues**

The quality, capacity and range of the region's business event venues enables the Waikato to attract and host events of all formats, sizes and budget, with Claudelands Conference and Exhibition Centre, and Mystery Creek Events Centre among New Zealand's foremost multi-functional events spaces.

- **Sustainable Funding**

With multiple councils and industry partners contributing financially to Hamilton & Waikato Tourism, the impact of one or more funders reducing or withdrawing their support would be significant.

- **Lack of Large Scale Accommodation**

The Waikato's lack of larger scale, quality accommodation, especially at the 4.5 star level, continues to limit the region's ability to compete for many large events or to host concurrent events of scale.

- **Workforce Shortages**

Event venues and associated services in the Waikato (and the rest of New Zealand) continue to find it challenging to secure dedicated and qualified staff in a timely or cost efficient manner.

- **Limited International Connectivity**

While the Waikato's close proximity to Auckland Airport and recent roading upgrades provide mitigation, the region's lack of direct international flight services may act as a (at least perceived) barrier for offshore buyers.



# Key Trends

In an ever-changing world, the following key trends are anticipated to have the greatest impact on the business events sector over the coming years.

- **Reduction of Business Event Budgets**

With businesses still navigating their COVID-19 pandemic recovery journey, as inflation reaches record levels, and the cost of living continues to increase, clients are tightly managing expenditure.

- **Increasing Focus on Social Sustainability**

Globally, public and government scrutiny of the environmental and ethical aspects of sustainability continue to increase, with clients and delegates' demanding greater transparency from venues and operators.

While government efforts to strengthen regulatory oversight and enforcement of particular environmental legislation continue, the proactive prioritisation of social sustainability may increasingly provide operators with a competitive advantage with clients and delegates.

- **Reduction of Corporate Carbon Footprint**

Greater awareness of the environmental impacts of business travel and growing pressure on businesses to minimise their carbon footprints disadvantages long-haul destinations such as New Zealand, despite available mitigations (e.g. low-emission airline options and carbon offsetting programmes).

- **Remote Working and Virtual Meetings**

A by-product of the COVID-19 pandemic has been the accelerated adoption of remote technological alternatives to face-to-face meeting and traditional work environments. While research suggests that technology is unlikely to fully replace the need for in-person in the long-term, clients are likely to expect greater integration of technologies (hybrid events) as a means of increasing reach, enhancing content and managing costs.

- **Regeneration of Business Events Sector**

The sector continues to face a supply and workforce shortage, impacting their ability to meet client needs, and requiring operators to recruit and train new workers. Innovative short solutions are required to fill immediate gaps, with an increased focus on worker development and retention to be prioritised.

# Strategic Direction

The strategic direction for the 2023 - 2026 prioritises regional collaboration to accelerate the region's recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic and ultimately, to enhance the Waikato's standing as New Zealand's leading regional business events destination.

Rebuilding a stronger and more resilient sector is a key focus for the next 3 years and will be critical to both maximising domestic opportunities and reconnecting Waikato with the world.



# Mission

The regional aspiration for Waikato as a business events destination for 2023 - 2026.

To collectively build on Waikato's standing as New Zealand's leading regional business events destination, and sustainably grow economic, social, cultural and environmental outcomes.



# Objectives

How the 2023 - 2026 mission will be achieved.



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## ► Grow Volume and Value

Sustainably increase total delegate days 300,000+ by 2026.



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## ► Support Key Sector Growth

Business events build awareness of key sectors, promote innovation and support long-term investment.



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## ► Showcase the Waikato

Business events positively profile the region, drive repeat visitation, promote advocacy, and wellbeing.



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## ► Build Back Better Together

Promote multi-stakeholder collaboration and strengthen regional capability.

# Strategic Priorities

Key areas of focus for 2023 - 2026.

1

## **Maximise Domestic Opportunities**

Materially growing local and domestic market volume and value will be central to growing the region's business events sector, with the shorter lead times and greater certainty of domestic business events providing an opportunity to rapidly build momentum.

2

## **Connect Waikato with the World**

With the revival of international business events, it is essential that the Waikato remains top of mind and local operators are supported to connect with international markets and buyers. Hamilton & Waikato Tourism will continue to work with Tourism New Zealand and other partners to promote the region, keep event planners informed and identify event opportunities.

3

## **Collaborate to Deliver Better Regional Outcomes**

Cooperation has never been more important in the business events sector, with strengthening regional collaboration, achieving greater coordination and consistency of messaging, and proactively building high-performing partnerships all critical to increasing competitiveness and maximising collective outcomes.

4

## **Set the Sector up for Success**

Key to maintaining and enhancing the Waikato's position as a leading business events destination is ensuring that the region continues to have the right people, funding, infrastructure and support in place for it to thrive.

5

## **Environmental and Social Sustainability**

Understanding how the business events sector can establish and maintain a key role in supporting the regional initiative to achieve a more environmentally sustainable, prosperous and inclusive Waikato region by 2030.

# 1. Maximise Domestic Opportunities

Materially growing local and domestic market volume and value will be central to growing the region's business events sector, with the shorter lead times and greater certainty of domestic business events providing an opportunity to rapidly build momentum.

## 1.1 Redefine the Domestic Value Proposition

Refine Waikato's value proposition as a domestic business events destination in line with existing regional positioning work (e.g. Destination Management Plan and The Waikato Story) and work with industry partners and key stakeholders to promote compelling and consistent story telling.

## 1.2 Grow the Association Market

Prioritise the pursuit of large association opportunities with preference given to conferences aligned to key sectors and occurring in shoulder or off-peak periods. Hamilton & Waikato Tourism to work with strategic partners, key sector representatives, PCOs and associations to scope the opportunity (aligned to regional cycles) and support their attraction (and retention).

## 1.3 Engage with Decision-Makers

Proactively identify and pursue opportunities for meaningful engagement with key decision-makers (direct and indirect) and coordinated promotion of the Waikato as a business events destination, including sales calls, trade shows, and hosting of familiarisation and site visits.

## 1.4 Identify Destination Partnership Opportunities

Investigate opportunities to build on the success of the North / South collaborative marketing initiative by partnering with regions to offer mutually beneficial multi-destination outcomes for associations and other identified markets segments (e.g. corporate and incentives).

## 1.5 Leverage Waikato's Major Events Programme

Partner with event and industry stakeholders to attract and/or create business events aligned to major events hosted in the Waikato, and leverage the major events programme to enhance the region's appeal as a business events destination and extend delegate stay.



## 2. Connect Waikato with the World

With the revival of international business events, it is essential that the Waikato remains top of mind and local operators are supported to connect with international markets and buyers. Hamilton & Waikato Tourism will continue to work with Tourism New Zealand and other partners to promote the region, keep event planners informed and identify event opportunities.

### 2.1 Refine the International Value Proposition

Refine Waikato's value proposition as an international business events destination in line with existing regional positioning work (e.g. Destination Management Plan and The Waikato Story) and work with industry partners and key stakeholders to promote compelling and consistent story telling.

### 2.2 Revive 'Project Waikato'

Revive and refine (as required) 'Project Waikato' - a business events incubator established to collaboratively attract Australasian and international conferences to the region - to support the Waikato's efforts to reconnect with the world and build momentum in key international markets.

### 2.3 Engage with Decision-Makers

Proactively identify and pursue opportunities for meaningful engagement with key decision-makers (direct and indirect) and coordinated promotion of the Waikato as a business events destination, including communications, trade shows, and hosting of familiarisation and site visits.

### 2.4 Leverage Strategic Partnerships

Partner with Tourism New Zealand, BEIA and other strategic partners to position the Waikato as an attractive business events destination in Australian and key international markets, identify hosting opportunities, access support and coordinate bidding / pre and post incentive activity.

### 2.5 Identify Destination Partnership Opportunities

Explore opportunities to partner with aligned destinations in New Zealand and key international markets (e.g. other agricultural hubs) to offer dual and multi-destination solutions.

# 3. Collaborate to Deliver Better Regional Outcomes

Cooperation has never been more important in the business events sector, with strengthening regional collaboration, achieving greater coordination and consistency of messaging, and proactively building high-performing partnerships all critical to increasing competitiveness and maximising collective outcomes.

## 3.1 Establish a Business Events Advisory Group

Establish a strong and effective business events advisory group that draws on the skills, knowledge and practical experience of industry leaders and key stakeholders to provide Hamilton & Waikato Tourism with guidance and support.

## 3.2 Strategy Launch Stakeholder Roadshow

Introduce key stakeholders and wider industry partners to the Strategy via a Launch Roadshow that sets out the region's priorities for the period, explains how everyone fits into it and highlights opportunities for collaboration.

## 3.3 Run an Annual Industry Forum

Establish an Annual Industry Forum to promote constructive dialogue with and between local operators with the aim of cultivating a connected and collaborative industry. Operators will have the opportunity to expand their networks, while being updated on regional progress, receiving the latest market research and hearing from industry leaders on key topics.

## 3.4 Partner with Key Sectors and Territory Institutions

Partner with key sector organisations and territory institutions to develop connections, build capability, and identify and support the pursuit of event content, including the exploration of cross-sector intersections (e.g. sustainability and innovation) opportunities.

## 3.5 Evaluate Convention Bureau Partnership Programme

Evaluate the effectiveness of the Convention Bureau Partnership Programme and identify opportunities for increased alignment, and more meaningful collaboration, and better aligned outcomes.

## 3.6 Develop a Waikato Advocates Programme

Establish a Waikato Advocates Programme that supports influential individuals and organisations to advocate for the Waikato as a business destination in key markets.

## 3.7 Promote the Role of Business Events

Collaborate with industry partners to educate public and private sector audiences on the strategic role and value of business events with the objective of increasing awareness, engagement and, ultimately, support for the sector.

## 4. Set the Sector up for Success

Key to maintaining and enhancing the Waikato's position as a leading business events destination is ensuring that the region continues to have the right people, infrastructure and support in place for it to thrive.

### 4.1 Build a Resilient and Sustainable Workforce

Ensure that the business events sector is able to attract, retain, and build the capability of staff to maintain regional competitiveness is critical to maintaining regional competitiveness. An industry led working group, supported by Hamilton & Waikato Tourism, will collectively explore strategies for overcoming ongoing staffing issues.

### 4.2 Optimise Existing Hotel and Accommodation Stock

Work with industry partners to identify strategies (e.g. enhanced communication and engaging additional providers) for optimising existing hotel and accommodation stock to better meet delegates' needs.

### 4.3 Provide an Effective Collective Voice for the Sector

Provide a collective voice for the sector and support business event stakeholders to identify effective strategies to advocate for, and raise awareness of critical issues affecting business events such as accommodation challenges.

### 4.4 Maximise Funding Opportunities

Leverage the launch of the Strategy and increased awareness of the sector's value, to proactively pursue opportunities for additional (new and existing) funding to support its implementation.

# 5. Environmental and Social Sustainability

Understanding how the business events sector can establish and maintain a leadership role in supporting the regional initiative to achieve a more environmentally sustainable, prosperous and inclusive Waikato region by 2030.

## 5.1 Enhance Sector Sustainability

Work with industry partners to identify effective strategies to evaluate, grow awareness and adoption of sustainability best practice and reporting.

## 5.2 Explore Opportunities to Better Quantify Sector Value

Work with providers and stakeholders to explore pragmatic methods of quantifying and reporting on the social, cultural, environmental and legacy impacts of the business event sector, to better understand the sector's value to the community beyond economic return.

## 5.3 Attraction and Development of Sustainability Focused Content

The Waikato region is committed to developing a more environmentally sustainable region, with the Waikato Management School the first business school in New Zealand to embed sustainability within its education programme. Hamilton & Waikato Tourism will work with industry partners to identify and pursue activity that support knowledge creation and exchange, and continue to position the Waikato as a leader in this field.

## 5.4 Events Industry Internship Programme

Industry partners, Hamilton & Waikato Tourism, and tertiary providers will collaborate to establish an events industry internship programme to help the region's emerging professionals and recent tertiary graduates to gain experience in the events industry. Interns will be mentored and have the opportunity to develop their skills, build confidence, and network with industry professionals, with participating organisations benefiting from an additional resource and fresh thinking.









# Implementation

## Governance

Hamilton & Waikato Tourism will lead the implementation of the Waikato Business Events Strategy in collaboration with industry partners (via the Business Events Advisory Group), with the ongoing engagement and support of key stakeholders.

Hamilton & Waikato Tourism will report back to the wider industry on progress against strategic objects at the Annual Industry Forum.

## Measurement

Regular evaluation of key quantitative and qualitative inputs will be critical to the successful implementation and ongoing refinement of the Strategy as the broader operational context evolves.

It is recognised that the cost and time required to undertake in-depth evaluation of business event activity beyond that provided by the Business Events Data Programme may be prohibitive in the current environment. Hamilton & Waikato Tourism will take a pragmatic approach to data capture, working closely with industry partners to identify practical solutions.



**For more information please contact:**

Hamilton & Waikato Tourism

Phone: +64 7 843 0056

Email: [businessevents@waikatoz.com](mailto:businessevents@waikatoz.com)

**The Mighty  
Waikato**  
New Zealand