



EVENT TOURISM,

IT'S NOT JUST ABOUT CELEBRATIONS

Providing oversight for events held on municipal lands to ensure safety and minimize disruption is important, but most local and state/provincial governments have a greater investment in the success of their events. They are leveraging events as another tourism opportunity – i.e. through systematic planning, development, and marketing of events, communities can attract more tourists, strengthen their brand identity, stimulate infrastructure and economic growth, and animate their community. Furthermore, communities globally recognize that a strategic approach to event tourism can result in the following benefits:

1. Sustained or increased visitor spending (e.g. accommodation, dining, activities, services, transportation)
2. Increased attractiveness of the destination to visitors and locals
3. A platform for raising awareness (e.g. climate change, social responsibility)
4. A showcase for local talent
5. Increased media coverage and publicity / increase brand awareness
6. Increased visitation from new and returning visitors who have the propensity to not only visit during an event, but at other times of the year due to the attractiveness of the destination
7. Development of new infrastructure
8. Increased event tourism and event production expertise and resources
9. Increased community pride, job opportunities and volunteerism.

Even though your community may not have a formal event tourism strategy, there are a few things your Event Office can do to support the success of events, above and beyond producing government-funded community celebrations and permitting. Take a moment to ask yourself if any of the following opportunities apply to your community.

Brand Cohesion

Is there an opportunity to adopt a more unified look and feel to how events are marketed inside and outside of your community? Is there an opportunity to position your community a certain way and ensure this image is consistent across different events? Is there an opportunity to consolidate marketing plans and budgets between different agencies (e.g. tourism association and chamber of commerce) to increase reach and, again, ensure a unified brand image?

Event Longevity

Are there barriers - current or potential - that may impact the future viability of an event of which your Event Office could assist in overcoming (e.g. land use, water safety, electrical safety, traffic congestion)? Do you have a policy in place that commits government resources to proactively addressing barriers as a result of new government policies that may impede an event's

success? An event may take a year (or more) to produce, so being proactive in addressing barriers is critical to their success.

Event Expertise. Do you have a central resource listing all of your community's event specialists, including volunteers? Do you proactively connect established events with new event organizers so that they can more easily address obstacles and share tips and tricks to hosting events in your community? Does your Event Office, or other event specialists in your community, attend event forums or conferences to stay abreast of trends and new event opportunities? Event Offices shouldn't just be a mechanism for permitting red tape – they should be partners of a broader event community that includes private event organizers, other government agencies (e.g. liquor licensing), and non-profit groups (e.g. arts and culture). This partnership should start with the Event Office attending all events and demonstrating an invested interest in the success of each event beyond ensuring events are observing policies and bylaws.

Economic Impact. Do you know the economic impact of some of your larger events? If events aren't independently capturing this information, can you collaborate with them and find new ways of interviewing sample groups of attendees to anecdotally understand their spending during an event? Is there an opportunity to work with the Chamber of Commerce or the local Business Improvement Association to survey businesses on the impact of certain events (you may even reveal issues that could be proactively addressed)? Can you work directly with hotels (or a hotel association) to gather room night information before, during and after events? Sharing simple updates with Council on a regular basis on the economic impact of events is an impactful way to emphasize the importance of event tourism and support budgetary decisions.

Event Offices can play a much larger role in event tourism than just permitting and producing events. Taking a leadership role in building your community's event capacity will pay off in spades for all of the reasons I've already mentioned. If you don't already have an event tourism strategy, maybe the first step is determining what more your Event Office can do to attract new events and ensure the continued success of existing events.

Rene Michaely is the founder and chief visionary of eproval, a software platform designed to automate and streamline complex application and approval processes including event permits. Based in Vancouver, BC Canada, his team has an intimate understanding of government permitting and approval processes through their experience working with and for event offices. Rene has also been a product manager at an event registration startup and founder of a web development firm specializing in event websites and complex applications. You can reach Rene at rene@eproval.com, learn more about eproval at www.eproval.com, or follow @eproval.