

A photograph of a fashion show runway. Two models in bright green, sequined outfits are walking away from the camera. The audience is visible in the foreground, some wearing face masks. The background is a dark stage with a black curtain.

Manawatū Business Events Strategy

MANAWATŪ
CONVENTION
BUREAU

We've got

3085

beds to book with

98

accommodation providers.



We're home to Massey University, UCOL Te Pūkenga and Institute of the Pacific United New Zealand campuses.



We had a

30%

increase

in domestic and international visitors from

December 2021 to December 2022.



We have more than

30 different venues and hotels

with capacity to host a variety of conferences and business events.



Palmerston North Airport

has gained Level 4 of the internationally recognised Airport Carbon Accreditation Programme.



We have a catchment
of more than
1.1 million
people within a
three-hour drive radius.



We are the
epicentre of
**agrifood
innovation**
in New Zealand.



We're home
to the only
**professional
theatre**
outside of the
four main cities.



We have
more than
3900
scientists and
researchers
working here,
and we're home
to three Crown
Research
Institutes and
Food HQ.



The Manawatū Business Events Strategy 2023 – 2027* outlines the strategic direction of the Manawatū Conference and Business sector. This strategy provides guidelines for how we, as a region, will attract business events that provide sustainable economic benefit.

This strategy has been developed by the Manawatū Convention Bureau in partnership with industry leaders and key stakeholders. Informed by regional and national strategic plans, this strategy promotes a collaborative approach to promoting Manawatū as an attractive business events destination.

Our vision for the region is to be ‘nationally recognised as an attractive business events destination’.

The strategy has five key outcomes:

- Build on our regional profile
- Improve oversight and understanding of the size and scale of business events in our region
- Establish a North and South partnership to leverage existing business events in the industry
- Leverage industry association and knowledge
- Build a consistent calendar of business events for the region to support a thriving economic sector

Successful implementation of this strategy relies on effective collaboration between the Manawatū Convention Bureau, industry partners and key stakeholders, with each playing to their strengths in maximising collective outcomes.

* This strategy only covers meeting, incentive, conference and exhibition (MICE) events. It does not include sporting events, including public facing events, ENZED SuperStock Teams Champs and secondary schools sporting events.

What is a business event?

The New Zealand Ministry of Business, Innovation and Employment (MBIE) defines a business event as an event that is hosted by an organisation (association, corporate, government) and is either an incentive, conference, convention, exhibition, or trade show.

Business events are often called MICE events, which stands for meeting, incentive, conference, and exhibition.



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

A formal gathering of people to discuss matters of shared interest, involving multiple sessions and speakers. These have more than 50 delegates and last at least two days.



Exhibition or trade show

A showcase of goods and services held for the benefit of a specific industry or interest group.

Business events are an important sector in our region

Conference and business events play an important role in bringing visitors to the region.

By attending conferences, delegates who may not have normally chosen to travel to Palmy and Manawatū for a holiday, are exposed to the city and region's attractions and encouraged to return at their leisure.

These delegates provide an important source of income for the commercial accommodation sector.

The average daily expenditure by conference and event delegates is significantly higher than for other visitors to the Manawatū-Whanganui region.

The annual spend attributed to conferences and business events in the Manawatū-Whanganui region was \$19 million in the year to December 2021.¹

There are four venues currently supplying information to the Business Events Data Programme. This programme measures business event activity across New Zealand. It focusses on MICE events attended by at least 50 people. (Public and social gatherings like weddings, dance parties, church services, concerts, sports events, and consumer events are not included in the statistics).

From this data we know that in 2023 there were:

- 318 business events recorded in the survey for Manawatū, accounting for 4.2% of national events.
- 57,969 delegates at these events in the region, or 4.7% of national delegates, and
- 81,445 delegate days, or 3.9% of national delegate days.



Tourism spending in Palmerston North increased by 11.7% (to \$500m) through the year to September 2023.¹

Domestic spending was up by 3.4% over the year, while international tourism spending increased by 105.3%. This compares with a 28.3% increase in tourism spending nationally, including a 3.7% increase in domestic spending and a 171.3% increase in international spending.

¹ pncc.govt.nz/files/assets/public/v/5/documents/council/research/economic-sector-profiles/full-reports/tourism-sector-profile-2022.pdf

Sectors of strength

Attracting conferences that align with our sectors of strength provides the opportunity to showcase our region's unique offering.

Leveraging our sectors and local industry enables us to add extra value to a delegate's conference experience. This leads to a more positive perception of an event and our region as a destination. It also helps to create a memorable event for conference organisers and delegates, leading to repeat visits and events.

Agritech & agrifood

Home to world-renowned companies, including FoodHQ, AgResearch, Plant & Food Research, Fonterra, BioLumic, and The Riddet Institute, among others, we have a unique cluster of scientists, researchers, engineers, and agri-experts who all work together to revolutionise agritech and food production. Our diverse landscape fosters agricultural and horticultural diversity, making it an ideal setting for experimentation and technological advancement.

Manufacturing

Manawatū's manufacturing sector primarily comprises food products, fabricated metal products, machinery and equipment manufacturing, and polymer and rubber products. With our strong emphasis on agrifood and a well-established reputation for research and development in this sector, we're an emerging destination for manufacturing and production.

Distribution & logistics

The central location of Manawatū and unique combination of road, rail, air, and sea connections have given us a strategic position in New Zealand's freight network. We're experiencing unprecedented growth with more than \$8 billion worth of transport and infrastructure investment planned and underway in the next ten years. Drawn by our exceptional location and robust supply chain infrastructure, we're also the place of choice for many international and national businesses, including Toyota NZ, Foodstuffs and Primary Connect (Countdown), who call us home.

Science & research

Within our vibrant ecosystem, we nurture research, cutting-edge technology, and a culture of innovation that breathes life into an array of industries. With a dedicated force of over 3,100 passionate scientists and researchers, coupled with the presence of three esteemed Crown Research Institutes and the dynamic hub of FoodHQ, Manawatū is primed to unleash the power and products of innovation to Aotearoa and the world.



Education

Manawatū is one of New Zealand's major education hubs, known for top-notch tertiary institutions Te Kunenga ki Pūrehuroa Massey University, Te Pūkenga UCOL, and Institute of the Pacific United New Zealand (IPU New Zealand). We have the nation's highest number of PhDs per capita and rank education as our fourth-largest employment sector, fueling inspiration and innovation.

Defence

Manawatū is a key defence hub in New Zealand, housing three significant defence bases – Linton Military Camp, Hokowhitu Campus, and Royal New Zealand Air Force Base Ōhakea. These bases play a crucial role in our workforce and contribute significantly to our economy through trades and services. With ongoing infrastructure investments, our region is uniquely positioned for growth and prosperity in the defence sector.

Health

Healthcare is a cornerstone of employment and excellence in Manawatū, with over \$35 million of investment in healthcare infrastructure completed or underway. We're home to two hospitals, MidCentral District Health Board and Crest and house advanced healthcare facilities and specialised services that include; oncology and chemotherapy, a dedicated ICU, coronary care, radiology, cardiology, and medical imaging, among many others.

Visitor economy

Manawatū has a unique visitor economy, with our true strength being domestic tourism. Over 95% of electronic card spending comes from our passionate locals. Business travelers and conference attendees also play a pivotal role in shaping our vibrant visitor market. While here, visitors discover the unique charm of our independent boutiques and off-the-beaten-path shopping spots, making them a valuable contributor to Manawatū's growth and prosperity.



SWOT analysis

Strengths

- Centrally located
- User friendly, compact city centre
- University city
- Home to a range of large scale corporation headquarters
- Two hours or less travel to major hubs such as Wellington.
- Our foodie scene
- Boutique shopping
- Venues with accommodation
- Ability to host large scale conferences and gala dinners in versatile venue spaces
- Scale and reputation of key industry sectors such as education, food innovation, agriculture and logistics and distribution

Weaknesses

- Venue and accommodation age
- Perception - being hard to get to, not having a lot to do
- Event capacity is restricted due to the size of venues and accommodation capacity
- Funding - little cash support
- Insufficient accommodation
- Accommodation competition over the summer season due to sporting events
- No specific natural advantage*

* While this is an area that our Council is investing through projects such as the Manawatū River programme this will be an ongoing project as we don't have the advantage that cities such as Queenstown have.



Opportunities

- New airport upgrades set to start 2025
- Leveraging Council partnerships to increase regional offering
- Leveraging key industry sectors to attract events
- Explore intersecting events – business events aligned with existing events within the region
- Building and retaining relationships with key clients and promoters to ensure ongoing support and business income for the benefit of venues
- Provide economic benefit to the region by attracting events from out of town
- Awareness and promotion of our region
- Discovery – as a lesser known region, we have the opportunity to provide something different

Threats

- No international airport in the city
- High cost of domestic air travel to Palmerston North
- Other destinations across New Zealand investing in conferencing and event facilities.
- Increasing adoption of virtual and hybrid events – our region’s venues have limited AV on-site and there are few local AV suppliers
- Intensifying regional competition with other regions, opening new event centres and developing older venues



Our goals to grow the business events sector

Building upon our regional profile

We will continue to raise the profile of Palmy and Manawatū and our regional offering. We will do this through regular industry communications, promotion of the region through mixed media, Bureau and venue presence at trade shows, and the promotion about our region's business event offerings.

Wellington is a major generating market for the region, with more than one-quarter of all domestic visitors originating from the Wellington region. Transmission Gully has greatly reduced the drive time to Wellington making the region even more accessible.

Auckland is the second largest domestic market for Palmerston North highlighting its strength as a business hub and VFR (visiting friends and relatives) destination.

The business hub that Palmerston North offers for a much wider catchment than Manawatū, reflects the opportunity to keep on strengthening this with many visitors coming for business, shopping, and events, especially from Whanganui, the towns within the Rangitīkei and Horowhenua regions which are all fairly close.²



Have better oversight to the number and size of business events happening in our region

The Events Data is an important data source in providing information on our regions business events activities. Our goal is to have all eligible venues signed up and submitting data to the Business Events Data Programme by the end of 2024.

Establish North and South partnership

Manawatū Convention Bureau have existing relationships to Bureau across New Zealand.

This would formalise a partnership with regions of similar offerings and mean that we can support each other to attract and secure bi-annual business events.

Leveraging industry association

An association is made up of a group of people who have the same interest or goal, rather than a company or corporate structure. Associations tend to make decisions about the location of their events based on existing relationships.

Establishing and developing relationships with associations is a great way to attract repeat events. We will utilise our city stakeholders to target our sector of strengths for conference bids.

Consistent events calendar

For many of our venues they already have consistent events that book with them. Our role is to attract new events into the region that are strategically aligned and help to minimise the gaps in the current business events calendar. It is also highlighting where other venues might have a large corporate event on which adds pressure to our accommodation sector. This goal is centered around creating transparency around the business events happening in the region.

What kind of events we will be attracting?

Our city offers a diverse range of venues, all having differing competitive advantages.

It is important when we are attracting events into our region that we understand the strengths and weaknesses of our venues.

Our strengths sit in the conference, workshop, trade show, training and meeting spaces. We are well set up with our venues for a range of different sizes up to 300pax. While we do have the Central Energy Trust Arena, Manfeild and Awapuni Function Centre that can hold large scale conference and business events over 300pax. We do need to be mindful of accommodation pressures and other events that are on in the region to give the best experience to delegates coming into the region.

We will work with industry bodies to leverage their partnerships in bidding for conferences and business events. This is an opportunity to showcase our sectors of strengths creating a better visitor experience for delegates coming into the city.

Incentives are an area for development and require attention to show off the added value our region has. There are hidden gems around the region that we need to tell the story better of.

These are the types of business events we will be pitching for:

Conferences

- 100-500 delegates
- 2 + night events
- Local and domestic delegates

Training, workshops and meetings

- 10 - 100 delegates
- Local and domestic delegates





Manawatū Convention Bureau

The Manawatū Convention Bureau is a function within Palmerston North City Council's Marketing team, which initiates and supports the attraction of business events to Palmy and Manawatū.

The Bureau's primary function is the promotion of Palmy and Manawatū as a business events destination of choice, creating demand and supporting partners' efforts to attract, develop, and retain business events.

We identify potential conferences that suit the Manawatū offering and develop bids for conference organisers in an effort to attract them to our region. We also help business event planners and business professionals to plan and hold successful events by assisting them to find the right venue, suppliers and experiences for their event.

We do this by:

- Providing bid support
- Organising and hosting famils
- Coordinating research
- Providing marketing support and promotional assets
- Creating and distributing resources to the industry
- Facilitating workshops with industry bodies

We may, at times, provide incentives to secure a conference. This is done at the discretion of the Bureau.



City + Business Events Advisory Group

The City + Business Events Advisory Group (CBEAG) monitors regional performance and the implementation of the Manawatū Business Event Strategy.

This is a collaborative group which brings together a range of regional stakeholders to discuss current market trends, opportunities in the market, and any threats for their business. This is a strategic way to look at business events and city events across the region.

During meetings, the group will discuss gaps and opportunities to fill our events calendar, new offerings, advertising/promotional opportunities, and provide updates about events coming to the region. Opportunities may include working with key industry sector representatives to attract and develop event support, content, and regional bids.

Events are an ever evolving industry which means that regular review of the membership of our group members is necessary to ensure we have the right people in the room at the right time.

Palmerston North City Council and the Manawatū Convention Bureau will review the membership of the group and assess it's direction at the end of each calendar year.



Current Membership + responsibilities:

Manawatu Convention Bureau	Report on current bids and opportunities for our region in the BE sector.
Palmerston North City Council Head of Events	Report on event industry trends and Palmerston North City Council events.
Manawatu District Council	Report on Manawatu industry trends and any upcoming points that may effect the events sector.
CEDA	Report against destination management plan and provide insight on new opportunities and regional offerings.
Palmy Venues	Report on upcoming events at Central Energy Trust Arena and Palmy Conference + Function Centre, industry trends and feedback.
Manfeild	Report to the group on upcoming events and opportunities at Manfeild, industry trends and feedback.
Awapuni Function Centre	Report to the group on upcoming events and opportunities at Awapuni Function Centre, industry trends and feedback.
Sport Manawatu	Provide insight on sport events happening in the region and any upcoming sporting events that will have an impact on the events calendar.
Palmy BID	Provide insight into how city centre businesses can be involved and support upcoming events.
Accommodation sector representatives	Report on the status of the accommodation sector in the region and report back to the accommodation sector about the CBEAG meetings and upcoming events.
Industry stakeholders	Provide general industry insight into the current market and how we as a group can support them with any issues or concerns.

Funding support

There is a trend emerging when bidding for business events for there to be additional support provided to events.

Sometimes that is in the way of value in kind, venue in kind or financial contributions. For many of our venues this may not be feasible to provide so its important we leverage existing funding avenues to help with the attraction of events.

Palmerston North City Council has many funding avenues available. The most appropriate fund for business events to apply to is the Sponsorship Fund. This fund is open to legal entities (trust, company, or incorporated societies) who have a finalised proposal that will positively highlight Palmerston North and provide quantifiable economic benefits to the city.

This fund will open at the start of the financial year and will remain open until it is fully allocated. A maximum of \$10,000 is available per application. Staff have the discretion to award up to 50% of total funding to an eligible proposal. Assessment and allocation decisions will be carried out by a panel of staff.



Additional industry support

Outside of the Manawatu Convention Bureau there is support available for this sector through Business Events Association Aotearoa (BEIA) and Tourism New Zealand. This support is targeted at the attraction and retention of conference and business events.

Business Event Association Aotearoa (BEIA)

- Provide a platform for promotion through web listings, email marketing, event planning resources including the Event Planners' Guide, and MEETINGS trade show.
- Facilitate data collection for qualifying venues through the Business Events Data Programme (BEDP).

The Business Events Data Programme measures business event activity in New Zealand. It focuses on MICE events attended by at least 50 people. The programme provides industry insights such as a region's market share, number of delegate and delegate days, number of business events and delegate spend.

Tourism New Zealand

- Provide promotion of Aotearoa to an international audience.
- Offer Conference Assistance Programme (CAP) to assist with international conference attraction.

The Conference Assistance Programme (CAP) is available to any association or organisation, including universities, that wants to bid to host an international conference in New Zealand with a minimum of 200 international delegates.

The Conference Assistance Programme can assist with:

- A financial feasibility study carried out by a Professional Conference Organiser (PCO) to ascertain the real cost and revenue potential of your conference
- Production of a world-class bid document and presentation to set your proposal apart from the rest
- Funding to cover the cost of presenting your bid to the International Committee, including international travel and accommodation
- Marketing and lobbying strategies designed to increase your chances of winning the bid

Action plan

Action point	Delievered by	Responsible for
Create a template for conference bids for venues to used.	Manawatū Convention Bureau	Supplying interested venues with a bid template to help attract business events to the region.
Promote the region as a destination for conference and business events through marketing campaigns.	Manawatū Convention Bureau	Produce marketing campaigns aligned with MEETINGS tradeshow.
Investigate and establish a North and South partnership.	Manawatū Convention Bureau	Connecting with an appropriate South Island convention bureau and investigating and establishing a formal partnership.
Qualify and bid for conferences and other business events.	Manawatū Convention Bureau, local venues	Finding and securing conferences aligned with our region's strengths.
Refocus the City + Business Events Advisory group to align with new strategy goals.	Manawatū Convention Bureau, Palmerston North City Council events team	Disestablishing the current CBEAG and reform it with members suited for new expected group outcomes.
Support local venues and suppliers to make them advocates for the region.	Manawatū Convention Bureau, CEDA	Educating local venues and suppliers on our region's unique offering and experiences.
Advocate for the region as an attractive business events desination.	Local stakeholders, supplier and venues, Manawatū Business Chamber, accommodation providers	Promoting our region as an attractive business events destination where possible.
Showcase our region's venues.	Local venues, Manawatū Convention Bureau	Getting new photos of our venues in use for a business event for promotion.
Gain better oversight of events happening in the region.	Manawatū Convention Bureau, local venues	The Manawatū Convention Bureau will create flowchart to help venues and local stakeholders qualify events that should go into the Events Calendar while our venues will continue to use the events calendar where appropriate.

Action point	Delivered by	Responsible for
Facilitate regional collaboration and shared networks.	City + Business Events Advisory Group	Attending the CBEAG meetings and continuing to collaborate with the members outside of the meetings.
Increase regional offering.	Local venues + suppliers, CEDA	Developing new products and experiences suitable for conference + business event delegates.
Attract and secure MICE events.	Local venues	Leveraging existing relationships with event organisers to obtain new and repeat events.
Strengthen our incentive packages.	Manawatū Convention Bureau, CEDA	Working with local businesses to create packages suitable for incentive events.
Continue to report to Palmerston North City Council around the benefit of the Manawatū Convention Bureau.	Manawatū Convention Bureau	Reporting on any projects the MCB is working on and the events secured through the MCB, along with the estimated economic benefit of these events.
Develop a wrap around support booklet which will include information about things to do in our region for them to extend their stay over the weekend.	Manawatū Convention Bureau, CEDA	Create and supply local venues and suppliers with a wrap around support booklet for business events.
Increase visibility and reporting of business events happening in the region.	Manawatū Convention Bureau, BEIA, eligible venues	Get all eligible venues participating in the Business Events Data Project.
Create stronger offering to conference organisers by leveraging local experts and stakeholders.	Manawatū Convention Bureau, local industry experts and stakeholders	Where appropriate, include letters of support and exclusive offers and experiences (tours, etc) in bids for business events.
Attract associations events to the region.	Manawatū Convention Bureau, local venues	Connect with associations to attract new and repeat events.

Manawatū Convention Bureau
manawatunz.co.nz

06 356 8199 / conference@pncc.govt.nz