

City of Barrie:

Kempenfest Festival Review Final Report



BEYOND TRAVEL & TOURISM

May 2025

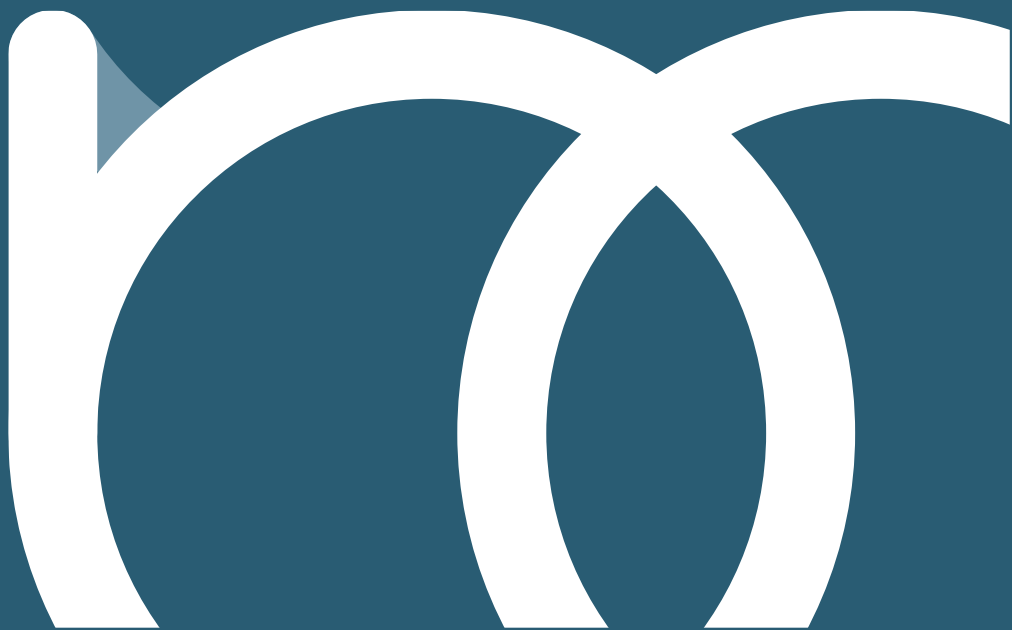


Table of Contents

Acknowledgements.....	2
Short History of Kempenfest.....	3
Introduction.....	4
The Make-up of Kempenfest.....	6
Looking Beyond Kempenfest.....	24
The Future of Kempenfest in 2050.....	26
Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, & Challenges.....	33
Strategic Recommendations.....	37

Acknowledgements

The City of Barrie and Kempenfest acknowledge that the lands, waters, and living things on which they exist and take place today are the traditional territory of the Anishinaabeg people, which include the Odawa, Ojibwe, and Pottawatomi Nations collectively known as the Three Fires Confederacy. These lands, waters, and living things form part of Treaty 16: Lake Simcoe Purchase (1815), which was signed by representatives of the Crown and certain Anishinaabe peoples at Kempenfelt Bay. Additionally, the City and Kempenfest acknowledge this place as the traditional territory of the Wendat Nation (Huron), who occupied these lands before the middle of the 17th century.

The City and Kempenfest are dedicated to honouring Indigenous history and culture and recognizing the enduring presence of Indigenous peoples on this land. They are committed to moving forward in the spirit of reconciliation and respect with all First Nations, Inuit, and Métis peoples. Importantly, this festival review report highlights the importance of fostering collaboration with Indigenous communities and leadership by specifically recommending the need to strengthen existing and explore new partnerships with local Indigenous leadership, groups, and communities.

This Kempenfest Festival Review Report is the result of stakeholder-driven approach. It would not be possible without the continued participation, engagement, and support from municipal staff, municipal council, and past and present Kempenfest Board of Directors. More specifically, we would like to thank the internal project team, including Ashley Chappell, Supervisor of Special Events & Programming, Paul Markle, Kempenfest Board of Directors Chair and Chief Executive Officer of the Barrie Chamber of Commerce, and Paul Fairly, President of Admiral Live. This festival review would not have been possible without your important insights, perspectives, and direction.

The research and development of the Kempenfest Festival Review Report was facilitated by the team at Bannikin, including James Arteaga and Camilo Montoya-Guevara, as well as collaborator Ruth Burns from Ontario Culture Days.

Short History of Kempenfest

Although not known as Kempenfest then, the first event that would become Kempenfest took place in August 1971 at the Formosa Springs Brewery.

Thanks to the efforts of Raymond Marshall from the Barrie Art Club, the purpose of the event was to showcase and sell the art created by artists. By 1975, the event had grown and was moved to Centennial Beach with Kiwanis Club joining as a co-sponsor and adding food to the event.

Other community service clubs quickly joined after recognizing the opportunities to fundraise for their own community initiatives. As a result, entertainment, a midway, food and beverage establishments, and other facilities were added to the event.

Today, the festival is extended beyond Centennial Beach to include 2 kilometres of Barrie's waterfront, and welcomes over 300 artisans, crafters, and antique vendors, as well as live music on two main stages, as well as a variety of food and beverage establishments.

Introduction

Background and Context

The City of Barrie engaged Bannikin, in collaboration with Ontario Culture Days, to support the goal of providing Kempenfest and the City of Barrie with strategic recommendations for the festival's evolution and sustainability to grow as a community and tourism event. The project took place from December 2024 to May 2025. Below are eight (8) project objectives identified to achieve the project goal.

1. To develop a baseline business model of Kempenfest (i.e., 2024).
2. To gather clarity around current marketing efforts.
3. To gather insights and perspectives from key festival ecosystem actors.
4. To gather insights and inspiration from comparator festivals.
5. To develop a future vision business model of Kempenfest.
6. To identify innovations and evolution opportunities.
7. To design and develop a pilot evaluation tool.
8. To conduct a resources scan.

The primary research question asked by the project team was, "What does Kempenfest, and the City of Barrie need to do to evolve and grow the festival sustainably as a community and tourism event?" To answer this question, the project team conducted the following:

- **Reviewed over thirty (30) background and context, and marketing approaches and materials**, including reports, programming materials, operational and site plan documents, financial statements, and other materials.
- **Facilitated one (1) in-person baseline business modelling session** with the project team.
- **Conducted an in-person festival site review with festival organizers**, including reviewing drone images and video.
- **Conducted research into three (3) comparator festivals**.
- **Conducted eighteen (18) key informant interviews** with current and former Kempenfest Board of Directors, municipal staff, municipal councillors, and the Mayor of Barrie, among others.

How to Read This Report

This report is for the Kempenfest Board of Directors to support the festival's evolution and sustainability, to grow Kempenfest as a community and tourism event. However, at the same time, the strategic recommendations given in this report will also provide insight on how the City of Barrie, with support from its partners like Tourism Barrie, can support the festival moving forward.

The report is divided into five (5) main sections that provide an overview of Kempenfest 2024's make-up; learnings from other festivals similar in location, size, and offerings; an overview of the future vision; key strengths, weaknesses, challenges, and opportunities; and finally, strategic recommendations moving forward.

Importantly, Kempenfest 2024 was selected for review because it was the latest year the festival took place. As a result, the strategic recommendations are based on the planning and execution of Kempenfest 2024. However, it is important to note, there have been many initiatives undertaken by Kempenfest before 2024, especially before the COVID-19 pandemic, and after 2024 in preparation for Kempenfest 2025. This is important to note because it shows the continued evolution and adaptation of Kempenfest each year, particularly finding solutions to concerns from previous years, and leveraging new opportunities identified to increase sustainability and innovation. As a result of this festival review report, some insights and recommendations have already informed changes to Kempenfest 2025.

Note: Throughout the report, the term “*visitor*” is used to mean someone travelling 40 kilometres or more to attend the festival, the term “*resident*” is used to mean someone travelling less than 40 kilometres to attend the festival, and the term “*attendee*” is used to mean both visitors and residents attending the festival. Additionally, “*Kempenfest*” is used throughout the report to refer to both (Kempenfest) Barrie inc. (organization), and the Kempenfest festival.

Baseline Business Model

Kempenfest’s baseline business model was designed as part of this project by the Bannikin team with input from the internal project team, including Kempenfest’s Board of Directors Chair, the President of Admiral Live, and the City of Barrie’s Supervisor of Special Events & Programming. The baseline presents various areas related to the festival’s outcomes, people, value, and process. The baseline accounts for the festival as it was planned and executed in 2024. However, as mentioned previously, despite focusing on Kempenfest 2024, there is a recognition that the festival has done many different initiatives and taken different approaches to things before 2024, particularly prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, and most recently in preparation for Kempenfest 2025.

About the Flourishing Business Canvas

An important tool used to develop the baseline business model is the Flourishing Business Canvas (FBC). This tool is an innovation management and storytelling tool designed by Antony Upward through over a decade of careful and deliberate study, practice, testing and refinement. This tool can be used to model a business, tell stories, and strategize toward an inspiring and flourishing future.

It builds on business modelling tools that came before, such as Osterwalder’s Business Model Canvas, by asking additional questions that are necessary and sufficient to create the possibility for flourishing. More specifically, past business modelling tools based the value of an enterprise mostly or solely on profitability. This led to approaches to understanding enterprises, such as Kempenfest, and planning for the future with little consideration for the other contexts and perspectives that are necessary to consider.

As such, the FBC pushes the approaches and areas traditionally associated with the business model canvas by including additional questions that enable the assessment of all material risks and all sources of innovation opportunity relevant today and in the future. For instance, it can account for biophysical stocks required to undertake the activities of planning and delivering the festival or it can consider the value co-creations

and co-destructions that result from the festival's activities and the delivery of its products and services. In total, there are 17 questions that comprise the FBC.

Within the scope of the *Kempenfest Festival Review* project, the FBC has been used as an information visualization and organization tool. This means that the project team has prioritized the mapping of information available and has added it to the FBC to create a baseline business model. As part of this process, information and data have been gathered primarily through the review of background documents, the in-person business modelling session with Kempenfest and City of Barrie internal project team, and through other additional inputs from the internal project team in their review of the baseline business model.

Importantly, the following sections present a narrative of the key details mapped onto Kempenfest's baseline business model on the FBC as it was managed and delivered in 2024. The below sections aim to present an overview and understanding of the festival's business model, including its governance, key stakeholders, products and services, activities, and value co-creations, among other key sections. Additional details have been included throughout as needed and appropriate. Importantly, not all the questions asked through the FBC could be answered based on the information collected and provided by Kempenfest. This is understandable as part of the festival's evolution planning includes exploring and confirming what type of information could be gathered and created moving forward, and how.

The Make-up of Kempenfest

Value Proposition and Strategic Foundations

Information on Kempenfest's strategic foundation (i.e., mission, vision, and values), and value proposition was pulled from documents shared by the City of Barrie and Kempenfest during the background documents review. Different documents spoke to similar but also different strategic foundations and value propositions (e.g., Kempenfest's 2024 and 2025 websites, Draft Festival Operations Plan Revised: July 27, 2024, Kempenfest's 2024 Special Event Permit Application, and Kempenfest Inc. By-law No. 6 2025). See Appendix A for specific excerpts. As a result, an initial finding in this festival review is that for 2024, there was no central document outlining the festival's strategic foundation and value proposition, as different documents spoke to different components of the strategic foundation and value proposition.

Note: (Kempenfest) Barrie Inc. is in the process of developing/approving a 2025 business plan that based on its table of contents includes a business summary (i.e., event summary, mission statement, business environment, position in the industry, and stakeholder involvement).

Value Proposition

Similar value proposition themes emerged about Kempenfest in these different documents mentioned above. These include the following:

- **Location** along the Barrie waterfront.

- Date of execution during the **August Civic weekend**.
- **Programming** of the festival, including vendors, activities, and entertainment connected to local and regional artists, craftspeople, musicians, etc.
- Direct and indirect **economic impact** on the community by both residents and visitors.
- **Revenue generation** for non-profit community organizations.
- **Social impact** on the community as a space for recreation and leisure, and a homecoming for current and former residents.

Similarly, many of these value proposition themes were reinforced by key informants, who were engaged in the process to better gauge and understand their perceptions around Kempenfest. Specifically, when asking key informants, what value they saw in being part of Kempenfest. The main value propositions highlighted include:

- **Platform to celebrate Barrie:** Current and former residents, as well as visitors, gather as a community and make community connections through the various arts and cultural offerings at the festival.
- **Collaboration and recognition:** Volunteering and participation facilitate a sense of belonging in the community and a space for partner organizations to collaborate amongst themselves and to be recognized and acknowledged by community members.
- **Revenue generation:** Partner organizations involved generate revenue for their organizations through the festival and reinvest it into community projects and initiatives. Businesses generate revenue both at the festival and in the surrounding area.

Goal(s)

Through the in-person baseline business modelling session, the internal project team identified certain goals for Kempenfest. However, as of 2024, Kempenfest did not seem to have documented long-term (i.e., multiple years) and short-term (i.e., year-over-year) goals. Some goals were alluded to in different documents, while others were mentioned verbally. Below are the goals identified through the in-person baseline business modelling session.

- Improving the attendee experience at the festival (incl. having a better understanding of attendee numbers).
- Ensuring it is a welcoming event for visitors (i.e., people travelling 40km or more).
- Increasing the quality of vendors.
- Providing revenue generation opportunities for community organizations.
- Improving festival programming.
- Ensuring a cohesive brand and visual identity.
- Maintaining physical site limits.
- Improving the financial health of (Kempenfest) Barrie Inc.

Moving forward, it will be important for Kempenfest to develop a clear festival mission, vision, and values statements informed by a long-term inspiring festival future, as well as a complementary but different value proposition statement. This will ensure further clarity among residents, visitors, and key partners on the purpose and value of Kempenfest. Additionally, by developing long- and short-term goals using the SMART

approach (i.e., Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant, and Time-bound), Kempenfest will have a clear strategic direction that will easily allow for monitoring and evaluation activities to be tied back to these goals.

Festival Governance

As outlined in *Kempenfest Inc. By-law No. 6* (2025), (Kempenfest) Barrie Inc. was incorporated as a corporation in 1983 and is managed by a Board of Directors (BoD). This BoD is made up of between three (3) and seven (7) directors, all of whom represent the members of the corporation (i.e., (Kempenfest) Barrie Inc.).

Membership and Responsibilities

Importantly, membership in the corporation consists of individuals representing not-for-profit associations who have been accepted by resolution of the BoD. They are entitled to receive notice of, attend and vote at all meetings. The *Kempenfest Inc. By-law No. 6* (2025) specifically mentions its members and collectively calls them the “core members.” Below are the core members of Kempenfest as well as their areas of programming responsibility, as outlined in the by-law. As you will note, the BoD operates as a working board, since members are actively involved in the day-to-day planning and operations of the festival.

- a) Chamber of Commerce: Sponsorship, advocacy, support, & marketing.
- b) Barrie Art Club: Arts & crafts.
- c) Optimist Club of Barrie: Antiques.
- d) Kiwanis Club of Barrie: Food.
- e) Knights of Columbus 10370: Oasis beer garden.
- f) The Rotary Club of Barre: Main Stage beer garden.

Additionally, three (3) friends of the corporation may be invited by the BoD when it deems appropriate, as outlined in the by-law. They may provide input at the meetings they attend, but are not members and do not have the right to vote. These include Tourism Barrie, Downtown Barrie Business Association (BIA), and the City of Barrie.

Executive Roles and Responsibilities

Within the BoD, there are executive roles undertaken by board members, including the President/Chairperson, Vice-President/President Elect, Past President, Secretary, and Treasurer. The President/Chairperson is elected by the core members for a period of two (2) years. This position rotates biennially among the core members in the following order: Knights of Columbus, Barrie Chamber of Commerce, Barrie Art Club, Optimist Club of Barrie, Barrie Kiwanis Club, and The Rotary Club of Barrie. Importantly, the outgoing President/Chairperson can remain on the BoD for two (2) years after their term in an advisory capacity with no voting rights, unless they currently represent a core member. Additionally, the Vice-President/President Elect is appointed or elected annually for a two (2) year term. The Secretary is appointed and can be a core member or another individual (in which case, they do not have a vote). See Appendix B for more information on the roles and responsibilities of each executive role.

Meetings

Business is conducted via board meetings, no less than eight (8) times per year, as well as its Annual General Meeting (AGM) held within 15 months of the previous AGM. Across its meetings, decisions are taken by vote, where each board member “shall have one vote and shall be allowed one voting delegate to represent that Member and to vote on its behalf at all meetings of Members of the Corporation.” At the AGM, discussions include the following:

- Receipt of the agenda.
- Receipt of the minutes of the previous annual and subsequent special meetings.
- Consideration of the financial statements.
- Report of the auditor or person who has been appointed to conduct a review engagement.
- Reappointment or new appointment of the auditor or a person to conduct a review engagement for the coming year.
- Election of Directors.
- Such other or special business as may be set out in the notice of meeting.

Additionally, the board can create an executive committee with no less than three (3) directors, and delegate, from time to time, any of the powers of the director with certain limitations. An example of an executive committee is the Finance Committee. The board can also create other committees or advisory bodies, from time to time, as it deems necessary or appropriate. Some examples of other committees or advisory bodies, all chaired by a board member, include the Site Committee, Entertainment Committee, and Marketing Committee.

Relationship Management

The baseline business model identifies several key actors, including types of individuals or organizations that have an interest in the fact that the festival exists. From the key actors, and using the table below, specific stakeholders and their roles were identified. Note, this is not an exhaustive list of all stakeholders, but instead presents an overview of the key stakeholders along with the role they play.

Role	Stakeholder
Festival organizers	• Service/activity clubs on BoD (core members)
Administration and site operations	• Admiral Live • City of Barrie staff
Programming partners	• Admiral Live • Huronia Festival of Arts and Craft • Cultural/community groups • Service/activity clubs on BoD (core members)
Attendees	• Residents • Visitors
Funders	• City of Barrie • Sponsors • Grant providers

Local representatives	• Charities • Volunteers • Municipal staff • Council members
Vendors and suppliers	• Transportation partners (e.g., Barrie Transit, Metrolinx, etc.) • Entertainers (rock and country artists) • City of Barrie staff (i.e., special events, parks and rec., etc.) • Emergency services (e.g., Barrie Police Service, private security, St. John Ambulance, etc.) • Local performers (rock and country artists) • Admiral Live
Community advisors (i.e., Friends of the Corp.)	• Tourism Barrie • Downtown Barrie BIA • City of Barrie
Profile builders and storytellers	• Bloggers • Journalists • Publications • Award organizations • Industry associations (e.g., TIAO, FEO) • Tourism Barrie • City of Barrie • Admiral Live

Formal Partnerships

Importantly, several of these stakeholders also act as partners for the festival. Specifically, within the context of the flourishing business canvas (FBC), a partnership is defined as a formal agreement that enables or provides key resources (financial and non-financial) to the festival.

The partners identified below have a written and formalized agreement with (Kempenfest) Barrie Inc. and are also the core members of the corporation. Importantly, they are primarily programming partners since they are each responsible for aspects of the festival's programming and/or services, as outlined in the *Kempenfest Inc. By-law No. 6* (2025).

- Barrie Art Club (arts & crafts): *Agreement: Kempenfest Inc. By-law No. 6*
- Kiwanis Club of Barrie (food): *Agreement: Kempenfest Inc. By-law No. 6*
- Barrie Chamber of Commerce (sponsorship, advocacy, marketing support): *Agreement: Kempenfest Inc. By-law No. 6*
- Optimist Club (antiques): *Agreement: Kempenfest Inc. By-law No. 6*
- Knights of Columbus 10370 (beer garden): *Agreement: Kempenfest Inc. By-law No. 6*
- Rotary Club of Barrie (beer garden): *Agreement: Kempenfest Inc. By-law No. 6*

Importantly, Admiral Live, which is an award-winning events company based in Barrie that provides event management, marketing, and talent programming, has been contracted by (Kempenfest) Barrie Inc. In their most recent *Event Management Agreement* dated October 28, 2024, it outlines the following services it will provide to the corporation:

- Event administration, management, and site logistics.
- Operational function, relative to the Main Stage/other concert areas of the event(s).
- Production management function, relative to Main Stage/other concert areas of the event(s).
- General event marketing.
- Grant writing services.
- Event data analytics, survey administration and development, and on-site management of survey intercepts.

Informal Partnerships

In addition to the core members, Admiral Live, and the City of Barrie, Kempenfest receives important resources and support from informal partners, meaning there are no formalized agreements or documents. Two key examples of informal partnerships include the City of Barrie, and Tourism Barrie.

The City of Barrie has provided Kempenfest 2024 with an in-kind value of approximately \$22,000, which included direct staff support, site services coordination, administrative support, park operations, marketing and communications, and discounted parking passes for vendors. Additionally, the city also allocated \$15,000 for shuttle bus services and \$25,000 for a study to support the sustainability and future of Kempenfest (i.e., this report). More specifically, the City of Barrie's Special Events Office sends a representative to attend (Kempenfest) Barrie Inc.'s board meetings in an advisory capacity, as a friend of the corporation, and provides recommendations throughout the event planning process. The Special Events Office also liaises and communicates with other municipal stakeholders on behalf of Kempenfest to assist with logistics and event management, where appropriate. Importantly, during the set-up of the festival, municipal staff liaise on-site between Kempenfest representatives and service providers such as fencing, porta-potties, among others. Additionally, throughout the festival weekend, the Special Events Office provides event staffing support, including the management of the information booths, St. John Ambulance team, and shuttle bus services, and coordinates with municipal parks staff, and ensures on-site emergency response access. Municipal park staff also ensure site cleanup each day during the festival, as well as at the end of the festival during site teardown.

Tourism Barrie has supported Kempenfest with guidance, advice, and marketing expertise. They are on-site at a welcome booth during the festival, and estimate a total investment of \$15,000-\$20,000 in 2024. This investment has supported the execution of destination marketing campaigns that promote Kempenfest as an overnight summer attraction during June, July, and August. This included Google Search and Display advertising, paid advertising on Instagram, Facebook, X, and TikTok, and 30-second video clips for social media. Additionally, they have invested in professional videography and photography of the festival to share with Regional Tourism Organization 7, Metrolinx, and Destination Ontario for destination marketing purposes. They have also ensured

Kempenfest is in the Go Train newsletter blog for festivals and events, Travel Adventure Guide, and in their weekly e-newsletter. Finally, they have also invested in collecting cellular usage data (i.e., Environics) and short-term rental and hotel occupancy reports during the festival dates to analyze the makeup of attendees, specifically, overnight visitors, day trippers, and residents. Of note, for Kempenfest 2023, they provided research and evaluation support by conducting an *Economic Impact Analysis Audience Capacity Tourism Event Assessment*.

New Partnerships

As part of the festival review, several key informants were engaged to better gauge and understand their perceptions on what new or enhanced partnerships, collaborations, and/or support opportunities Kempenfest should consider moving forward. Overall, nine (9) types of partnerships, collaborations, and/or supports were identified. Moving forward, it will be important for Kempenfest to formalize and clarify the roles and responsibilities between Kempenfest and its formal and informal partners to strengthen its cohesion, collaboration, and use of limited resources. Additionally, it will be essential to explore new partnership opportunities that align with the future direction of the festival.

Type	Opportunity
Cultural and community groups and organizations	Explore opportunities to collaborate with cultural and community groups and organizations in Barrie to support the diversification of the festival to better reflect Barrie today. Examples of organizations include the <u>Ethnic Mosaic Alliance</u> , <u>Uplift Black</u> , <u>McClaren Arts Centre</u> , <u>Barrie Native Friendship Centre</u> , <u>Barrie Area Native Advisory Circle</u> , etc.
Local businesses and business organizations	Work more closely with <u>local businesses and business organizations</u> to encourage local businesses to celebrate the festival through themed specials, and other opportunities that create a unique sense of place during the festival. Additionally, work closely with <u>accommodation providers</u> to create special incentives for visitors to stay overnight and attend the festival multiple days, and work with the <u>Downtown Barrie BIA</u> to explore opportunities to integrate/connect the downtown core with the festival.
Post-secondary institutions	Explore opportunities to work with post-secondary institutions like <u>Georgian College</u> and <u>Lakehead University's Barrie Campus</u> , and <u>Orillia Campus</u> , and encourage their participation in the festival through offering educational programming and volunteering.
Tourism organizations	Work collaboratively with <u>Tourism Barrie</u> to leverage their knowledge, expertise, and data/research to inform strategic decision-making around marketing and promotion.
Transportation organizations	Continue to explore opportunities to work with <u>Metrolinx</u> to leverage the Go Train and Allandale Go Station as a mode of

	transportation to the festival. This could include exploring marketing options.
Industry organizations and associations	Explore opportunities to work with industry organizations and associations connected to the festival's offering.
Sports and recreational groups and organizations	Explore opportunities to work with local sports groups, teams, and/or organizations to encourage their participation in the festival.
Other festivals/events	Explore opportunities to work with other festival and/or events taking place in the area to build excitement about the festival and to encourage longer visitation to the region during the festival.
Festival sustainability	Work with subject matter experts to improve the sustainability of the festival, including environmentally, socially, and economically.

Marketing, Promotion, & Festival Attendance

Festival Attendance

Importantly, there have been a variety of reports and surveys conducted to better understand the current make-up of attendees to the festival. Most recently, the *Kempenfest Visitor Satisfaction Survey: Short-form Intercept Survey Analysis* (2024), and *Kempenfest Visitor Information Survey: Long-term Survey Analysis* (2024) by Georgian College Research & Innovation, as well as the *Kempenfest 2023 Economic Impact Analysis Audience Capacity Tourist Event Assessment* (2024) by Tourism Barrie, and Environics Data from 2024. It is important to note, there were different calculation methods used to determine the estimated number of attendees and their make-up. As a result, the total number of attendees may be different in these documents.

According to Environics Data for Kempenfest 2024, 90,122 people attended the festival. 73.5% of attendees (64,993 people) were residents, which means they lived less than 40 kilometres from downtown Barrie. About 24.3% of attendees (22,405 people) were visitors from the region, which means they lived 41 kilometres – 160 kilometres from downtown Barrie. Finally, 2.2% of attendees (2,724 people) were visitors from outside the region, meaning they were coming from 161 kilometres or more from downtown Barrie. Of the visitors attending the festival, 75% attended during the day, with only 25% attending at night. This may indicate an opportunity to grow the number of visitors staying overnight at a local accommodation provider. Of the visitors, the following three (3) target groups were the most important based on the number of attendees and their index rate.

- TG7-Urban Diverse Families (25.6%): Starter to mid-aged families in urban areas, including multi-generational,

- TG6-Younger Diverse Couples (12.6%): Young singles, couples and starter families, and
- TG2: Exploring Country Couples (8.5%): older to mature couples living in rural and suburban settings.

Both TG7-Urban Diverse Families and TG6-Younger Diverse Couples have a higher-than-average index rate of visible minorities. TG6-Younger Diverse Couples saw a significant increase in unique visits to the festival between 2023 to 2024, which may indicate that changes made between 2023 and 2024 appealed more to this target group. This is important to note, because it is a demographic of interest to Kempenfest (i.e., young singles, couples, and starter families).

In comparison, of the residents, the following four (4) target groups were the most important based on the number of attendees and their index rate.

- TG3: Lake Simcoe Enthusiasts (26.7%),
- TG5: Penetanguishene Sightseers (9.8%),
- TG1: Suburban Middle-Aged Families (25%), and
- TG6: Moderate Collingwood Visitors (4.6%)

Both TG1-Suburban Middle-Aged Families, and TG6-Moderate Collingwood Visitors have a higher-than-average index rate of visible minorities. These target groups remained the same in 2023 and 2024, which may indicate a need for targeted audience development initiatives.

Interestingly, as part of the festival review, key informants were asked about their perceptions on the makeup of attendees to Kempenfest. Most overwhelmingly mentioned a mix of age groups, including children with parents, and/or grandparents, middle-aged and older adults, and teenagers. They also mentioned it was a mix of residents and visitors travelling from outside the city. However, a clear gap most identified was the lack of culturally diverse attendees. As one key informant said, *"White people mostly go down there, odd groups of non-white people, even when I sit back and listen to music, it's almost all white people, esp. at concerts..."* This coincides with the Environics data that, despite several visitor segments having a higher-than-average index rate of visible minorities, overall, most were not visible minorities.

Moving forward, it will be important for Kempenfest to further clarify its target markets and visitor segments based on its future value proposition and strategic foundations. Additionally, it will be important for Kempenfest and its partners, such as Tourism Barrie and the City of Barrie, to develop a shared understanding on how to calculate the number and make-up of attendees for mutual benefit.

Note: (Kempenfest) Barrie Inc. is in the process of developing/approving a 2025 business plan that based on its table of contents includes marketing (i.e., marketing plan synopsis, proposed media outlets, target markets, and tourism plan synopsis).

Currently, Kempenfest does marketing through Admiral Live, with guidance from the marketing committee. This includes social media (Facebook and Instagram posts and ads, and YouTube campaigns), radio campaigns, Kempenfest website, and website display and take-overs.

Kempenfest also receives marketing support from other partners like Tourism Barrie and the City of Barrie. Additionally, each vendor at the festival does their own marketing for their business. Prior to 2024, Kempenfest hired a design firm to rebrand the festival.

Despite there being many different actors marketing the festival, as of 2024, there did not seem to be a long-term marketing strategy or yearly marketing plan. This makes it challenging to understand what strategic direction, partnership opportunities, and tactics should be used for marketing, promotion, outreach and audience development.

Note: (Kempenfest) Barrie Inc. is in the process of developing/approving a 2025 business plan that based on its table of contents includes marketing (i.e., marketing plan synopsis, proposed media outlets, target markets, and tourism plan synopsis).

Moving forward, it will be instrumental for Kempenfest's success to have a multi-year long-term and annual marketing strategy and plan, approved by the Board and made available to key festival stakeholders. Such a plan would provide the main goal and objectives for marketing and promotion, identify the main target markets and visitor segments, and identify where partners can strategically support with marketing. Yearly marketing plans would outline specific tactics that would be used to reach ideal target markets and visitor segments and identify how partners will support each year.

Keeping Attendees Longer and Spending More

Key Informants were asked about strategies that can be used to keep attendees longer and spend more at the festival, as well as opportunities to grow and diversify the make-up of attendees. A key takeaway was the need to diversify the festival. Key informants reinforced the need and opportunity to introduce new activities, programming, and vendors that reflect the changing make-up of Barrie (e.g., 2SLGBTQIA+ programming, Indigenous communities, South Asian community, Latin American community, etc.), as well as diversify the Kempenfest BoD to reflect the community's diverse make-up and include representation from different cultural groups. In addition to this, key informants shared the following programming, operations, and marketing and promotion opportunities.

Programming	Opportunity
Enhance the entertainment	Improve consistency of program quality and variety/diversity of entertainment across the different zones of the festival, including during the day to attract a broader audience. Additionally, include more culturally diverse entertainment on the main stage (e.g., Bollywood, Caribana, Reggae, Indigenous performances, etc.) and side stage (e.g., local talent, diverse music genre, etc.)

Collaborate with cultural organizations	Work with local cultural organizations to develop specific programming and activities.
Develop a proper food village	Ensure food and beverage are a key component/attractor for the festival by exploring opportunities to extend the operating hours after 6pm, and ensuring a variety of food and beverage options, including having options for different dietary restrictions.
Integrate Downtown Barrie	Explore opportunities to partner with Downtown Barrie BIA and downtown businesses to encourage attendees to visit the downtown and create a connected experience (e.g., encouraging visiting restaurants after 6pm, leveraging shuttle service to get to downtown, including satellite programming etc.)
Offer promotional codes/discounts and packages	Explore opportunities to offer promotional codes/discounts to local food and beverage vendors and businesses, as well as offer package deals with local accommodation providers (e.g., entertainment tickets, discounts at local food and beverage vendors/businesses, and discounts at local accommodations)
Leverage new technologies as part of the festival experience	Explore opportunities to integrate different technologies into the festival, including apps, to engage with attendees.
Focus on engaging youth, post-secondary students, and newcomers to Barrie:	Work to develop programming and outreach that focuses on engaging youth (e.g., youth music programming and music workshops, etc.) and marketing and promotion efforts to encourage youth, post-secondary students, and newcomers to the festival.
Operations	Opportunity
Strategically place vendors and other assets	Ensure vendors, including food and beverage, as well as health and safety facilities (e.g., washrooms, cooling stations, shaded areas, etc.) are placed at strategic locations to enhance the walk-through experience at the festival.
Develop a festival ambassador team	Explore the opportunity to develop a team of ambassadors to assist attendees during the festival (e.g., directions, health and safety facilities, scheduling, etc.) and improve the overall festival experience.
Collect data about the festival each year	Improve the process of data collection for the festival, including exploring opportunities to gather data from local businesses, accommodation providers, etc. to better understand the impact of the festival on the larger community. Additionally, use

	insights gathered each year to inform the following year's festival operations.
Improve the ways to get to the festival	Work to improve parking challenges, including better advertising the shuttle service, as well as encouraging the use of the Go Train to improve the flow of attendees.
Marketing and Promotion	Opportunity
Strengthen the Festival's Brand Identity	Clarify Kempenfest's brand promise and clearly articulate what makes the festival unique. Define key target audiences and outline how the festival's programming is designed to meet their interests and needs. Ensure that marketing efforts are purposefully aligned to attract these audiences and communicate the festival's distinct offerings effectively.
Enhance Inclusive and Strategic Marketing Efforts	Elevate the visibility of culturally diverse programming—particularly on the secondary stage—through targeted promotion. Update marketing materials to better reflect the diversity of the community, including youth, families, couples, and visible minority groups. Explore partnerships with influencers and content creators to extend the festival's reach, and invest in strategic digital campaigns to attract younger audiences and visitors from outside the region.
Clarify and Communicate the Festival's Purpose	Develop a clear and compelling articulation of Kempenfest's purpose to guide internal planning and strengthen external messaging. This will support stronger advocacy efforts locally, regionally, and with funders, and help build broader recognition of the festival's value as both a cultural and economic driver.

Financial Administration & Governance

Kempenfest (Barrie) Inc.'s financial administration is overseen by its Board of Directors, with input from the Finance Committee. However, due to the distributed model of festival planning—where individual member organizations oversee specific components such as vendor management, programming, and food services. Financial tracking remains **fragmented and decentralized**.

This lack of centralized financial control creates significant challenges in achieving complete oversight, transparency, and audit-readiness. Historically, each core organization has tracked income and expenses related to their portion of the festival independently, contributing to incomplete or delayed financial integration.

2024 Financial Performance

The 2024 fiscal year showed marked improvement in the organization's financial position, reversing a 2023 deficit and reducing its overall asset shortfall.

Highlights from the 2024 Audited Financial Statements:

- **Total Receipts:** \$784,857 (up from \$475,151 in 2023)
 - Including \$234,600 in sponsorships, \$213,123 in event revenue, \$68,150 from food vendors, and \$54,991 in government grants
- **Total Disbursements:** \$683,870 (up from \$625,713 in 2023)
- **Annual Surplus:** \$100,987 (vs. a \$150,562 deficit in 2023)
- **Net Asset Deficit:** Reduced to **-\$20,817**, compared to **-\$121,804** in 2023
- **Cash Position (Year-End):** \$25,985
- **Deferred Sponsorships and Ticket Sales:** \$36,650 (new item in 2024)
- **Outstanding Member Obligations:** Fully resolved in 2024; down from \$149,996 in 2023

This surplus was achieved through both revenue growth and significant one-time debt forgiveness: all outstanding member obligations were forgiven in 2024, representing a non-cash income item of \$149,996.

Audit Opinion and Financial Oversight Risks

As in previous years, the 2024 **Independent Auditor's Report** issued a **qualified opinion** due to the inability to verify the completeness of revenue from ticket sales, fundraising, and sponsorships:

"The completeness of these revenues is not susceptible to satisfactory audit verification."

Although common among not-for-profits, this issue raises concerns regarding internal financial controls, especially in the context of public funding. Additionally, the audit reiterates **economic dependence** on member support, even as formal obligations were cleared in 2024.

Debt Position and Liabilities

Kempenfest carried a **refinanced RBC term loan** (formerly a CEBA loan) of \$23,108 as of October 31, 2024. This loan is due January 2029, with an annual interest rate of RBC Prime + 3.43%, and secured by organizational assets.

Other liabilities included:

- **Accounts Payable and Accrued Expenses:** \$23,007
- **Deferred Sponsorships & Ticket Sales:** \$36,650
- **Total Liabilities:** \$82,765

These figures reflect improved short-term liquidity and progress toward financial stability.

Future Financial Recommendations

To consolidate gains and mitigate long-standing financial risks, the following measures are recommended:

- 1. Centralize Financial Oversight:** Implement a unified financial reporting system that aggregates revenues and expenses across all partner organizations. This will address audit gaps and enhance strategic financial planning.
- 2. Strengthen Financial Leadership and Administration:** Assign a dedicated financial role within Kempenfest operations (staff or contracted) responsible for budget development, reporting, and compliance, and reporting to the Board Treasurer. This will increase accountability and capacity for multi-year planning.
- 3. Achieve Full Audit Readiness:** Strengthen internal controls around sponsorship tracking, ticketing, and vendor income to enable full revenue auditability. Standardizing documentation and reconciliation procedures will be essential.
- 4. Build a Reserve Fund:** Use the current surplus to begin creating a contingency or reserve fund to safeguard against future deficits and support sustainability initiatives.
- 5. Align Budgeting with Strategic Goals:** Financial reporting and budgeting should directly reflect the organization's broader strategic priorities (e.g., community engagement, diversity, and environmental sustainability), enabling more effective internal and external communications.

Festival Operations and Programming

Kempenfest offers a wide variety of programming options for attendees over the course of four (4) days during the August Civic Holiday weekend. Importantly, the festival has been recognized multiple times, including in 2024, as one of the **top 100 festivals in Ontario by Festivals and Events Ontario**.

A key document for the festival's operations is the *"Festival Operations Plan: Kempenfest 2024,"* (2024), which provides an event summary, programming hours, vehicle access rules, right of way activity, communications, security services summary, emergency response and safety plan, sanitation and waste management, and shuttle services.

Note: (Kempenfest) Barrie Inc. is in the process of completing a Festival Operations Plan for Kempenfest 2025.

Key Players

The operations of Kempenfest involve a variety of key players that support the success of the festival. Admiral Live, in collaboration with Kempenfest's Site Committee, and Entertainment Committee, plays a key role in the festival's operations and programming as outlined in the *Event Management Agreement* (2024). Admiral Live's role and responsibilities related to the festival's operations and programming include the following.

- Event administration, management, and site logistics.

- Operational function, relative to the Main Stage/other concert areas of the event(s).
- Production management function, relative to Main Stage/other concert areas of the event(s).

However, Kempenfest's members also play a lead role in programming and operation, but focus on specific sections of the festival. The *Kempenfest Inc. By-Law No. 6*, specifically outlines what each member is responsible for in the festival, as seen below.

- Barrie Art Club: Arts & Crafts
- Optimist Club of Barrie: Antiques
- Kiwanis Club of Barrie: Food
- Knights of Columbus 10370: Oasis Beer Garden
- The Rotary Club of Barre: Main Stage Beer Garden

Importantly, despite each member focusing on a specific section of the festival, there are other key players to provide programming and operational support, in addition to the support from over 400 volunteers. These include the following

- **The Huronia Festival of the Arts (HFAC):** Works with the Barrie Art Club and Kiwanis Club of Barrie to manage the arts and crafts and food section.
- **Robertson Amusement Limited:** Provides the Midway entertainment,
- **Admiral Live:** Manages the entertainment of the Main Stage and Family Stage, while the Rotary Club of Barrie manages the beer garden at the Main Stage.
- **St. John Ambulance:** Provides first aid services with medical responders located at information booths throughout the festival, and mobile support when booths close.
- **City of Barrie:** Provides many event and site operations support, as well as funding the Barrie Transit shuttle bus service.

Programming

As mentioned in earlier sections, Kempenfest offers a variety of programming for a breadth and diversity of attendees from children to seniors. Below are the main types of programming available at the festival in 2024.

- **Robertson's Midway:** Attracts families and kids with amusement rides and carnival games.
- **Kool FM & Rock95 Community Stage (Family Stage):** A fully fenced space with the capacity for approximately 200 people.
- **Kids Village:** A staple for kids and families with various activities.
- **Food Vendors, Kiwanis Food Booth, and Poutine Village:** A variety of 30+ food vendors, including food trucks, service club food booths, sampling, and food artisans (e.g., packaged, prepared in advance meals). This includes traditional options like burgers and hot dog, and in 2024 included a Poutine Village.
- **Oasis Patio (Beer Garden):** A beer garden with seating and tables.
- **OLG Mainstage Concert Grounds (Main Stage) & Rotary Beer Garden:** A fully fenced space with the capacity for approximately 4900 people that offers ticketed entertainment.

- **Antiques Vendors:** Initially an antique mall, now includes various used items from 30+ antique dealers.
- **Arts and Crafts Vendors:** Originally featured fine artists, now includes a broader range of 300+ vendors.

Importantly, Kempenfest positions itself as a festival that celebrates local talent and attracts internationally renowned entertainers. Throughout the long weekend, the festival showcases over 50 performing artists. The Main Stage focuses on well-known performers in the pop, rock and country music scene, while the Family Stage focuses on smaller and more local and diverse performers that appeal to families.

A key finding in the festival review was that, as of 2024, there was no long-term festival programming plan to guide decisions each year. Additionally, a key opportunity identified was the diversification of the music and entertainment programming to showcase and appeal to a range of ages and cultural backgrounds, as well as the opportunity to develop relationships with neighbouring festivals such as Boots and Hearts to coordinate different performers.

Note: (Kempenfest) Barrie Inc. is in the process of developing/approving a 2025 business plan that based on its table of contents includes event management (i.e., diversity & respect, staffing & third-party hires, team profiles & experience, audience & event analytics, finance & event fundraising, operations plan synopsis, patron services, production, programming, theme development, vendor & activations, venue accessibility & ticketing, vendor assets & facilities, and venue lay-out & site mapping).

Future Programming and Operations

Key informants highlighted the following as aspects of the festival that should continue to be offered moving forward. This includes the entertainment section since the major artists attract a significant number of attendees, and the Main Stage generates revenue for the festival. Midway and the Kids Village because it attracts families with children and makes the festival a family-friendly event. The Vendors Alley (mix of different vendors) because it offers a variety of products and free samples to attendees, and the Arts and Craft Vendors because it remains a popular space to showcase local talent.

However, at the same time, key informants identified the following as components that should be reconsidered moving forward. This includes the antique dealers due to the declining quality and relevance. However, with better curation, there may be an opportunity to improve the area. The Poutine Village due to the lack of variety; however, with better marketing, it could draw additional attendees.

Other general comments key informants mentioned included the need to provide a variety of food and beverage options, especially for dietary restrictions, the importance of curating and vetting vendors to ensure a high quality and unique offering, diversifying the entertainment to incorporate more culturally diverse artists that reflect the community, and focusing more attention on the Secondary Stage including better marketing and attracting higher profile artists.

Monitoring and Evaluation

Through the research, three (3) main measures of success were referenced multiple times. These include improved financial health of the festival, revenue growth, and increased attendance (esp. visitors). However, these and other measures of success were not documented in a specific place, but instead, mentioned in different documents or verbally. As a result, there is an opportunity to identify specific criteria or metrics that can be used to determine if the goal and objectives of the festival have been achieved.

At the same time, Kempenfest and its partners (i.e., City of Barrie, Tourism Barrie, Georgian College, Admiral Live) have conducted different monitoring and evaluations of the festival both in 2024 and in previous years. This means there are continuous processes of collecting data and tracking progress towards goals and objectives, and assessing the effectiveness, efficiency, and impact. However, these goals and objectives are not clearly identified, and there is no consistent way of gathering data. Below are some examples.

- **Drone footage** of the festival was used to estimate the number of attendees present in specific zones at one (1) hour intervals.
- **Envionics Analytics mobilescares data** technology was used to estimate the number of attendees, as well as their demographic make-up. This was published in *"City of Barrie – Special Events Office Kempenfest 2024 Visitor Insights: Presentation to Kempenfest Board Members & City Staff"* (2024).
- **Destination International's event impact calculator** was used in 2023 to measure the direct and total business sales in the surrounding area during the festival. This was published in Tourism Barrie's *Report on Kempenfest 2023 Economic Impact Analysis Audience Capacity Tourism Event Assessment* (2024).
- **Long-form survey and short-form intercept survey** was conducted in-person during the festival. These were published in Georgian College's *"Kempenfest Visitor Information Survey: Long-form Survey Analysis"* (2024), and the *"Kempenfest Visitor Satisfaction Survey: Short-form Intercept Survey Analysis"* (2024).
- **On-site evaluation** of the festival using a standardized evaluation sheet. This was published in Cobalt Connects' *"Kempenfest Site Review & Public Survey"* (2018).
- Gathers insight on the number of attendees (i.e., residents and visitors), arts and craft exhibitors, antique dealers, food vendors, live performing artists, volunteers, and volunteer hours. They also collect information on overnight stays, audience demographics (i.e., age, ethnicity, gender), communication methods of hearing about the event, marketing reach (i.e., Facebook, Instagram, YouTube, X, website display and takeovers, radio campaigns, website performance), and economic impact from both residents and visitors. This was published in Admiral Live's *"Kempenfest 2023 Sponsorship Report"* (2023).
- **Kempenfest BoD debrief meeting, and survey** is conducted after the festival has concluded to gather insights and feedback on what worked well, what was not successful, festival improvement suggestions, perspectives on the current BoD structure, and improvement suggestions for board meetings.

Moving forward, it will be important for Kempenfest to develop measures of success that align with the strategic foundation and value proposition of the festival. It will also be important to ensure that measures of success and indicators are aligned with grant requirements to ensure future access to grants. Finally, it will be important to work with

key partners to develop a standardized monitoring and evaluation framework that leverages the knowledge and resources available from partners like the City of Barrie, Tourism Barrie, Georgian College, etc. By doing this, Kempenfest will be able to better communicate the many benefits the festival brings and contributes each year to partners and the broader community.

Future Monitoring and Evaluation

As part of the festival review, key informants were asked what success looked like for Kempenfest. By understanding what “success” meant to key informants, Kempenfest can begin to identify clear and measures of success, as well as a standardized monitoring and evaluation framework. Below are seven (7) measures of success identified by key informants, as well as potential indicators as sub-bullet points.

Measure of Success	Description and Potential Indicators
Financial Sustainability	Ensuring Kempenfest has made enough after the festival to be able to continue the following year without the need for financial and non-financial support from the City. • <i>Set \$ amount to retain and reinvest in the festival the following year.</i>
Economic Impact	Baseline and measure spending at the festival and at local businesses, as well as an increase in accommodation bookings during the festival weekend. • <i>\$ amount of revenue generated by vendors, ticket sales, sponsors and accounted in Kempenfest organizational budget and financial reporting.</i> • <i>\$ amount of revenue generated by local businesses, especially in the downtown, during the festival weekend.</i> • <i>Number of rooms booked at accommodations during the festival weekend.</i>
Attendee Numbers and Make-up	Having received a high number of attendees at the festival, including having a high number of returning attendees, as well as an increase in the make-up of attendees (i.e., diversity of attendees). • <i>Number of attendees, including number of visitors (coming 40km+).</i> • <i>Number of returning attendees and vendors from previous years.</i>
Reduction of Waste	Reducing the level of garbage generated by the festival, and the level of waste diverted to composting/recycling programs.

	• <i>Number or weight and type of waste (garbage, recycle, compost) produced during the festival.</i> • <i>Number and type of materials from festival repurposed for future festivals or other events.</i> • <i>Number of vendors using recyclable and/or biodegradable materials.</i>
Collaboration and Sponsorship Numbers	Having a high level of collaboration among key stakeholders, as well as an increase in the number of sponsors and sponsorship revenue. • <i>Number of collaborations and partnerships as part of festival delivery.</i> • <i>Number of collaborations and partnerships developed through the festival.</i> • <i>Level of overall success for Kempenfest (i.e., total \$ revenue generated, total # of attendees) vs. individual sections of the festival.</i>
Quality of the Experience	Ensuring a high level of satisfaction among attendees and vendors, as well as positive feedback from partners, and community groups, both in-person and on social media. • <i>Level of satisfaction among attendees, vendors, partners, and community groups through festival survey.</i> • <i>Number of complaints related to the festival (e.g., parking, etc.) gathered from volunteers and information desks.</i>
Community Pride and Participation	Having a high-level of community pride about Kempenfest. • <i>Level of positive sentiment among residents about Kempenfest.</i> • <i>Number of residents attending the festival.</i> • <i>Diversity of demographics from residents who attend the festival.</i> • <i>Number of residents who volunteer with the festival (incl partners organizations).</i>

Looking Beyond Kempenfest

To gather a broader understanding of the festival and event landscape in Ontario, three (3) festivals were reviewed to gather insights and learnings for Kempenfest. These festivals were selected because they all take place along a waterfront and their similar festival programming, including art, culture, music, and food and beverage.

Festival Descriptions

Firstly, the Sound of Music Festival in Burlington, Ontario is a four (4) -day music event that began in 1980. It takes place Thursday to Sunday during the Father's Day weekend

in June. It is the region's largest music event with an eclectic combination of new and emerging artists, local and international talent, past favourites, and today's most popular performers. The festival takes place at Spencer Smith Park along Lake Ontario as well as in Downtown Burlington. The festival's average attendance is approximately 400,000 people, with most attendees (68%) being residents within a 40-kilometre radius, meaning about 32% of attendees would be considered visitors. Interestingly, the festival attracts a younger demographic with 53% of attendees being between the ages of 20-49 years old. To learn more, see Appendix C.

Secondly, Shake the Lake in Kenora, Ontario is a three (3) -day music event that began in 2024. It takes place Friday to Sunday during the August long weekend. The festival takes place at Jarnel Contracting Pavilion along Kenora's waterfront. The goal of the festival is to create the ultimate summer event at Lake of the Woods, combining incredible music, amazing food, collector cars, and community spirit. Its mission is to establish Shake the Lake as the next iconic event of the August long weekend - one that draws thousands of visitors to the beautiful Kenora Harbourfront, showcasing its vibrant community and all it has to offer. From world-class entertainment to unique local vendors, their mission is to create a weekend filled with fun, excitement, and lasting memories for people of all ages. To learn more, see Appendix C.

Thirdly, the Mariposa Folk Festival in Orillia, Ontario is a three (3) - day music festival that was founded in 1961. It takes place Friday to Sunday in July. It is an award-winning family-friendly celebration of song, story, dance and craft. The festival takes place at Tudhope Park along Lake Couchiching just outside Downtown Orillia. The festival's mandate is the promotion and preservation of folk art in Canada through song, story, dance and craft. The festival's average attendance is over 30,000 people, including residents and visitors travelling 40 kilometres or more. To learn more, see Appendix C.

Key Takeaways

- Explore opportunities to extend the festival experience beyond the specific festival days could build buy-in and excitement in the community before the festival takes place (e.g., pre-festival activities, sharing behind-the-scenes stories, etc.).
- Explore opportunities to leverage the unique landscape where the festival takes place (e.g., waterfront and water-based activities).
- Find ways to offer different types of experiences for people with different accessibility needs to encourage new attendees who may not have attended otherwise to experience the festival.
- There is value in connecting the festival along the waterfront to the downtown core, including developing programming and a corridor to encourage attendees to explore offerings in the downtown area.
- Offer shuttle services to get to the festival from other locations, including existing parking lots and/or transit hubs, to foster an overall positive experience for attendees driving and/or using other modes of transportation.
- Communicate logistical information about the festival, including how to get to the festival and move around, as well as accessibility information before attendees arrive so they can plan their trip accordingly.

- Ensure there is a volunteer program that respects and celebrates volunteers (e.g., volunteer award, recognition, etc.) to foster a positive atmosphere and encourage volunteers to return.
- Focus on making the festival more accessible to encourage new attendees with different abilities to feel welcomed at the festival (e.g., Midway “low sensory times”, etc.)
- Identify communication channels for different purposes such as festival planning and logistics (e.g., volunteer recruitment, vendor applications, sponsorships, etc.) and festival marketing (e.g., entertainment lineup, programming, etc.)
- Explore opportunities to develop unique festival merchandise with local producers and suppliers (e.g., a local beverage named after the festival, etc.)
- Cross-promote/collaborate with key tourism ecosystem actors like the local destination marketing/management organization, local accommodation providers, and transportation services to present an interconnected attendee experience.
- Leverage the landscape around the event site to create a unique experience (i.e., leveraging the harbourfront to have the Wooden Boat Parade).
- Focus on becoming a more eco-friendly/green festival to reduce the environmental impacts.
- Encourage transparency about the festival to increase community buy-in and support.
- Gather festival data, including attendee numbers, ticket sales, etc. and use this data to inform future marketing and sales plans.

The Future of Kempenfest in 2050

As part of the festival review process, the internal project team, including Bannikin, Kempenfest, Admiral Live, and City of Barrie representatives, undertook a future visioning process to imagine an ideal future for Kempenfest in 2050. Throughout two (2) 1.5-hour sessions, project team members sought to co-design key components of an ideal far-future state (2050) for the Kempenfest using the Flourishing Business Model Canvas as the base and contextualized by probable and desirable futures outlined through the Future-Fit Business Benchmark’s break-even goals.

The year 2050 was selected for this exercise to help plan for the choices and actions that, over several years, will help shape the future in which Kempenfest inhabits. Without proactive planning, the future will simply unfold through a series of short-term decisions and constraints. As such, the main aim of the future ideation exercises was not to determine the future, as this cannot be done, but rather to imagine the ideal context that the festival can create and inhabit. This allows for the development of a clear vision for the festival, as well as the identification of potential innovations and/or evolutions for the festival to prioritize over the coming years.

Importantly, by setting a clear vision, it is possible to navigate towards a desirable and necessary future, one that supports a flourishing planet, society, and economy. This long-term perspective allows current assumptions to be challenged and goals to be aligned with frameworks like the Future-Fitness Business Benchmark and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), ensuring the creation of a future that inspires and sustains.

Ideal Future Vision and Mission

Through the festival review, Bannikin facilitated a visioning exercise with the project team, where the inputs were used to draft the ideal 2050 future vision for Kempenfest:

A vibrant celebration of Barrie's people and cultures, seamlessly blending tradition with innovation. It stands as a beacon of arts, culture, and environmental stewardship, inspiring residents and visitors alike to care for and celebrate the City of Barrie.

Further to the ideal future-state vision, the internal project team also explored the purpose of the festival's existence into the far future. The inputs from this exploration were used to draft the below working purpose statement or mission for Kempenfest:

Kempenfest exists to celebrate Barrie's rich cultural heritage and drive local economic growth, while fostering community engagement and inclusivity. As a multi-cultural, fully accessible event, it continuously adapts to the times, ensuring a vibrant and sustainable future for all.

A Future-Fit Kempenfest

An initial question considered by the internal project team through exploratory conversation was, "In the far future, what does Kempenfest need to do to meaningfully contribute to the realization of a future-fit society?" To set the context for a future-fit society, the Future-Fit Business Benchmark break-even goals were used as a grounding reference point.

The [Future-Fit Business Benchmark](#) is a strategic thinking tool designed to guide businesses towards a sustainable and regenerative future. It translates systems science into actionable principles, goals, and indicators, helping companies align their operations with the needs of society and the environment. By setting ambitious environmental and social targets, the Benchmark provides detailed guidance on making meaningful progress and engaging stakeholders in a future-focused narrative.

As part of the benchmark, the break-even goals indicate the minimum performance thresholds that a business or organization must strive to reach to ensure they are not hindering society's progress towards future-fitness. The table below represents the eight system conditions for a future-fit society and the related break-even goals. The third column summarizes the key challenges, implications, and opportunities identified as possible and necessary for Kempenfest's future-fitness. The implications and needs identified are initial explorations of how future-fitness relates to Kempenfest and point to the longer-term evolution recommendations for the festival presented in the fourth column.

8 System Conditions for a Future-Fit Society	Break-even Goals	Implications and Needs	Key Recommendations (3-5+ years)
Energy is renewable and available to all	Energy is from renewable sources	- Collaborate with the City to ensure the festival site (i.e., Centennial Park) has access to ground power, ideally available across the full festival site. - Transition away from the current use of gas/diesel-powered generators, which also bring a large cost. - Explore alternative and renewable energy sources, including how the surrounding natural environment can support energy provision (i.e., sun and water). - Increased reliance on electricity for personal use and mobility (e.g., electric cars).	- City of Barrie: Facilitate a space or process (e.g., advisory committee) for festival organizers to inform City planning processes and future infrastructure projects and improvements. - Kempenfest: Pursue grants and earmark funds to transition temporary power infrastructure into renewable sources. - Kempenfest: Baseline festival waste and emissions to plan out data-based transition and explore alternative energy solutions.
Water is responsibly sourced and available to all	Water use is environmentally responsible and socially equitable	- Confirm reliable, consistent, and sustainable water sources to transition away from bottled water and for operators to access. - Connect to the City's infrastructure and provide/retrofit water-filling stations (e.g., water hydrants). - Explore how water from the lake can be processed and purified for consumption.	- City of Barrie: Provide service infrastructure grants for festival to reduce single-use materials and transition to more environmentally friendly materials. - Kempenfest: Form partnerships with sustainable solutions

		• Provide water for health and safety of participants and climate change measures (e.g., extreme heat).	organization (e.g., Living Green Barrie, Clean Up Barrie) to inform festival planning and help source alternative solutions.
Natural resources are managed to safeguard communities, animals, and ecosystems	• Natural resources are managed to respect the welfare of ecosystems, people and animals	• Increase relationship and explore partnerships with a range of environmental groups in the area (incl. carbon offsetting, environmental restoration, support environmental planning of the festival, reduce negative environmental impact of the festival, etc.). • Showcase and value the waterfront along the festival grounds. • Festival showcases the natural environment and heritage as part of the cultural fabric of Barrie. • Waste management and reduction implications to account for a more holistic accounting of the festival's activities. • Enhance the festival's positive impact beyond economic and plan for environmental contributions.	• Kempenfest: Establish relationship with environmental protection and revitalization organization to help inform festival planning and suggest environmental programs to include (e.g., Pollinate Barrie, Clean Up Barrie). • City of Barrie: Encourage environmental protection and enhancement of festivals through grant incentives with dedicated environmental targets.
The environment is free from pollution	• Operational emissions do not harm people or the environment • Operations emit no greenhouse gases	• Transition away from the current use of gas/diesel-powered generators, which produce harmful emissions and bring a large cost. • Transition the festival (incl. vendors) away from single-use products to	• Kempenfest and City of Barrie: Collaborate on vendor familiarization and single-use reduction/removal initiatives, including

	• Products do not harm people or the environment	avoid waste production – move toward a plastic/single-use free policy. • Further understand and account for the festival's impact on the surrounding environment (incl. attendee traffic, waste production, operator/vendor emissions, travel-related impacts, etc.). • Increase relationship and explore partnerships with a range of environmental groups in the area (incl. carbon offsetting, environmental restoration, support environmental planning of the festival, reduce negative environmental impact of the festival, etc.).	information sharing, fee reduction for waste-cap (incl. support of Living Green Barrie). • Kempenfest: Become single-use free by 2031, set goal and celebrate initiatives and progress. • City of Barrie: Work with festival organizers to develop waste-free policies and set city-wide goal for fully removing single-use plastics and other waste from festivals by 2030.
Waste does not exist	• Operational waste is eliminated • Products can be repurposed	• Move toward a plastic/single-use free policy. • Explore partnerships for re-usable containers, cups, bottles, etc. • Better understand operational waste produced from festival planning and execution. • Better understand where waste and greywater go and how they are processed to identify alternative solutions and aspects that are working. • Increase relationship and explore partnerships with a range of sustainability solutions/innovation groups (e.g., Living Green).	• See recommendations above.

Our physical presence protects the health of ecosystems and communities	• Operations do not encroach on ecosystems or communities	• Better understand operational waste produced from festival planning and execution. • Enhance the festival's positive impact beyond economic and plan for environmental contributions. • Further communicate and showcase the festival's contributions to the local community and environment.	• Kempenfest: Expand mission and monitoring efforts to include environmental contribution and benefit as part of festival's focus. • City of Barrie: Revise and strengthen environmental reporting requirements for festivals and events in the city. • City of Barrie and Kempenfest: Collaborate on communications campaign to highlight social and environmental benefit of festivals and events in Barrie.
People have the capacity and opportunity to lead fulfilling lives	• Community health is safeguarded • Employee health is safeguarded • Employees are paid at least a living wage • Employees are not subject to discrimination • Employee concerns are actively solicited, impartially judged and transparently addressed	• Better recognize and encourage volunteer contributions and create a culture of continued participation. • Ensure that festival activities, activations, vendors, and involved organizations fully reflect and represent Barrie's community. • Board of Directors' members take collective actions to drive further community impact. • Festival planners and organizers are representative of Barrie's diversity. • Foster citizen culture and celebrate stories of participation. • Festival marketing fully communicates the environmental,	• City of Barrie: Source and feature positive volunteer(ing) stories to include in city communications and encourage community engagement. • Kempenfest: Work with social representation organizations to provide vendor and volunteer opportunities to underrepresented community members (incl. Barrie Pride, Barrie Native Friendship Centre,

	• Product communications are honest, ethical, and promote responsible use • Product concerns are actively solicited, impartially judged and transparently addressed	social, and economic impacts and implications of the festival.	Women and Children's Shelter of Barrie).
Social norms, global governance, and economic growth drive the pursuit of future-fitness	• Procurement safeguards the pursuit of future-fitness • Financial assets safeguard the pursuit of future-fitness • Lobbying and advocacy safeguard the pursuit of future-fitness • The right tax is paid in the right place at the right time • Business is conducted ethically	• Ensure balanced representation of local talent, diversity, and products across vendors, performers, and providers. • Manage financial assets in a way that supports the long-term sustainability of the festival, ensuring transparency and accountability in all transactions. • Formalized policies that ensure the festival's sustainability goals and broader environmental and social objectives.	• Kempenfest: Create a social- and environmental-returns fund for all organizers to contribute into and festival participants to donate so that funds can be distributed to local initiatives and NGOs in the name of Kempenfest. • Kempenfest: Include minimum local goods procurement requirements for vendor businesses at festival.

Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, & Challenges

Below are the strengths and weaknesses of Kempenfest, as well as the opportunities and challenges for the future of the festival. These are based on the research conducted, including the key informant interviews, the in-person festival site review, the baseline business modelling session, and background and context, and marketing approach and material review. Seeing as most of the research has focused on the festival's internal aspects, only a few challenges (i.e., external factors) have been identified and included. We anticipate building on these through the input and perspective of Kempenfest and City of Barrie project leads.

Strengths: <i>Internal attributes and resources that support a successful festival.</i>	Weaknesses: <i>Internal factors that might hinder progress or success of the festival.</i>
Attendees Make-up • Attendance size • Variety in demographic make-up of attendees (e.g., families, young adults, seniors, kids, etc.) • Loyal returning multigenerational attendees (e.g., many came as kids and are now coming with their own kids and grandkids) • Significant attendance by both residents and visitors Vendors & Offerings • Returning vendors • Variety of attractions (e.g., arts and crafts, antiques, food areas, entertainment stages, beer gardens, midway, etc.) • Services and products provided cover key needs (i.e., food, shelter, safety) Economic Impact • Significant economic impact to the local economy • Supports local businesses and local artisans Community Support & Staple • Long-standing tradition in the community • Brings the community together • Connections with the local social clubs and other organizations	Administration • Development of administration processes and human resources limited Programming • Reliance on contractor for bulk of programming • Unclear value proposition and festival angle (e.g., is it a music fest? Is it a folk arts fest?) • Limited variety and options for foods and beverages (e.g., dietary restrictions, etc.) • Limited quality control on certain vendors (e.g., antiques area, and arts & crafts area) Financials • Limited reserve fund to plan for the following year • Limited funding going back to Kempenfest • Unclear sponsorship model and continuity/relationship care • Lack of uniform and thorough financial reporting by all organizing partners Marketing & Communications • Limited advertising about the shuttle service. • Lack of a long-term marketing strategy or yearly marketing plan (incl. defined target audiences and market segments)

• City support for the festival • Resilient despite different challenges, incl. the pandemic • Strong buy-in and participations from volunteers and volunteer organizations Location • Location along the waterfront Reputation • Recognized & Award-winning festival by FEO • Long established history and reputation (50+ years) Collaborations • Long-established relationships with and among festival organizers • Interest and support from key organizations [through informal agreements?] (incl. City of Barrie, Tourism Barrie, Chamber of Commerce) • Established contract with supporting companies (e.g., Admiral Co.) • Key ancillary services provided through partnerships and relationships (incl. Shuttle service, Security, Event support staff) • Connection to communities/groups via festival organizers • Local relationships and partnerships established Governance & Management • Value co-creation and motivation for select stakeholders is well understood (incl. festival organizers, programming partners, participants, funders, local reps, community advisors) • Established base of stakeholders • Established processes and dynamics for planning and operationalizing festival	Event Operations • Components of event planning/programming are delayed due to delayed budget approval by the BOD • Unclear employment vs. volunteer structure / lack of capacity to employ ongoing organizer and event staff. • Lack of articulated environmental and social priorities (i.e., no info on causes it is supporting, waste reduction initiatives, etc.) Governance • Outdated foundational resources (incl. Mission, Vision, and Value-proposition) • Lack of organizational determination based on governance model (i.e., committee members lead their own agendas vs. organization-wide cooperation) • Lack of defined monitoring, evaluations, and reporting approach • Unclear membership structure (incl. associated benefits and responsibilities) Collaborations • Lack of formalized partnerships for support services (incl. marketing, research) • Lack of direct festival-community connection (indirect via communities of festival organizers) • Lack of defined and cultivated relationships with range of stakeholders. • Reliance on in-kind support for key operational aspects (incl. support staff from City)
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Opportunities: <i>External conditions that could be advantageous if leveraged.</i>	Challenges: <i>External factors that could cause trouble or pose risks to success.</i>
Governance & Management • Conduct an organizational strategic plan • Strengthen governance policy • Identify and confirm the unique value proposition of the festival and communication with attendees • Develop a multi-year festival strategy • Develop a monitoring and evaluation system, including confirm performance metrics and methods of collecting data • Include environmental contributions and benefits to the festival's focus Partnerships & Collaborations • Formalize the relationship with Tourism Barrie and the City of Barrie • Develop and formalize a partnership with the Downtown Barrie BIA • Work with cultural organizations and industry associations • Continue to engage Indigenous communities, groups, artists Programming & Operations • Continue to work with Admiral Live • Continue to focus on family programming during the day and older demographic programming in the evening • Increase the cultural diversity of the entertainment to reflect the demographics of Barrie, including on the Main Stage • Enhance the artistic and community-minded programming at the Secondary Stage (e.g., LGBTQ-focused, educational, youth-focused, etc.)	• Inter-organizational relationships and challenges. • Weather conditions • Financial state of member organizations • Increasing costs • Lack of parking spaces near the festival location • Public demand and expectations for public setting of the festival • Festival location on non-festival/events area (i.e., public park and beach) • Planning and construction that affects festival site • Although a strength, the length of the festival's history and established reputation could pose a challenge for evolution and change of the festival • Shifting economic realities at the national and international scale impacting consumer decisions, including travel, and cost of goods and services • Decrease in funding and resourcing affecting arts and culture sector, festivals and events included

- Make food & beverage a main component of the festival, including diversifying options
- Ensure services and supports are available throughout the festival
- Develop a cohesive festival site plan
- Develop a robust volunteer program
- Improve transportation options to the festival
- Reduce the environmental impact of the festival

Marketing & Communications

- Continue to leverage existing brand for marketing materials
- Develop a multi-year festival marketing strategy
- Continue to develop yearly marketing plans with tactics
- Celebrate the long history and reputation of the festival
- Leverage existing tools and technologies used by partners to enhance the festival experience
- Ensure key information is communicated to attendees before arriving and at the festival (e.g., accessibility, directions/modes of transportation, shuttle services, accommodation options, vendor/attraction locations)
- Attract newcomers, youth, culturally diverse attendees
- Improve marketing efforts to visitors (i.e., 40km+)
- Develop festival packages with local businesses (e.g., accommodation providers, restaurants, etc.)

Strategic Recommendations

Based on the festival review, the following are strategic recommendations for (Kempenfest) Barrie Inc. on how to support the festival's evolution and sustainability to grow as a community and tourism event. However, note, several specific actions and recommendations have been provided throughout the report.

The strategic recommendations are divided into three (3) areas: governance and management, operations and marketing, and partnerships and collaborations. They are also divided into ongoing (continuous), short-term (2025-2026), medium-term (2027-2030), and long-term (2031-2040) recommendations. Importantly, for ongoing, short-term, and medium-term recommendations, (Kempenfest) Barrie Inc. has been identified as the lead actioning organization; however, (Kempenfest) Barrie Inc. will need to work with the City of Barrie to determine how the city can best support these recommendations.

For long-term recommendations, (Kempenfest) Barrie Inc. or the City of Barrie have been identified as the lead actioning organization. Importantly, long-term recommendations have been identified based on the project's visioning sessions and analysis that compared the baseline business model of the festival (2024) to the ideal future state implications and need (pg. 28). The implications and needs that were identified were initial explorations of how future-fitness relates to Kempenfest, and points to the longer-term evolution recommendations for the festival.

Governance and Management

Short-term

1. Conduct an organizational strategic plan to reset the organizational structure and review (Kempenfest) Barrie Inc.'s governance, roles and responsibilities, priorities, financial management, and partnerships, as well as formally set the organization's values, vision, and mission.
2. Review and strengthen (Kempenfest) Barrie Inc.'s existing governance policy to formally set and familiarize the Board of Directors as a governance board, instead of a working board.
 - a. *Although the board is currently set as a governance board, the nature of the board members' involvement in the planning and delivery of the festival resembles a working board.*
3. Work with Admiral Live to strengthen their services agreement so that their work with (Kempenfest) Barrie Inc. supports the organization's system and viability.
 - a. *Specifically, this can include setting up processes for clear and transparent reporting, maintaining festival documentation within (Kempenfest) Barrie Inc. information platforms so that it can be easily accessed and shared within the organization.*

Medium-term

4. Clearly position and raise the profile of (Kempenfest) Barrie Inc. as the lead organizer and main organization responsible for festival administration, programming, and relationship management, including partnership development.

- a. *Although (Kempenfest) Barrie Inc. is currently functioning as the festival organizer, there is a need to further position the organization and clarify its role as the main festival organizer. This includes raising awareness about its role and gaining support from the Board of Directors.*
5. Develop a multi-year festival strategy that provides long-term direction and guidance for the festival organizers, including the festival's goals, planning priorities, value proposition, programming and audience engagement innovations, opportunities for potential partnerships, etc.
 - a. *This strategy would be for festival organizers (i.e., (Kempenfest) Barrie Inc., and partners) to action.*
 - b. *This could include:*
 - i. *Formalizing a consistent monitoring and evaluation system, including confirming performance metrics for the festival and methods of collecting data, to measure the impact and success of the festival year over year.*
 - ii. *Confirming the focus of making food and beverage a key component of the festival's offering.*
 - iii. *Confirming the continued focus on family programming in the family area during the day, and shift programming to focus on older demographics in the late afternoon and evening.*
 - iv. *Diversifying the entertainment on the Main Stage to reflect the diverse interests in Barrie and enhancing the artistic and community-minded programming at the Secondary Stage.*
 - v. *Explore opportunities to add new attractions and infrastructure to the festival. (e.g., water-based and sporting activities, and pet-friendly infrastructure, resting/cooling stations, etc.*

Long-term

6. Create a social- and environmental-returns fund that all festival partners and participants can contribute to financially to support local initiatives, NFPs, and NGOs in the name of Kempenfest.
7. Develop a minimum local goods procurement requirement for vendors.
8. Expand (Kempenfest) Barrie Inc.'s mission and monitoring efforts to include environmental contributions and benefits as part of the festival's focus.

Operations and Marketing

Short-term

1. Review and reassess festival organizers' roles, and responsibilities to identify potential gaps and overlaps and identify human resource needs.
2. Strengthen the festival operations plan
 - a. *This can include:*
 - i. *further mapping the attendee experience journey through the festival.*
 - ii. *Developing a robust and centralized festival volunteer program that acts as an added channel for festival representation and ambassadorship.*

3. Develop a multi-year festival marketing strategy to provide long-term direction and guidance for marketing and promotion efforts, including increasing visitor number (i.e., 40km or more).
4. Continue to develop and strengthen the yearly festival marketing plan to identify the strategic marketing and promotional tactics to implement that year and align the plan with key marketing partners such as Tourism Barrie.

Medium-term

5. Baseline the festival's waste and emissions to plan for a data-based transition and explore alternative energy solutions.
6. Establish relationships with environmental protection and revitalization organizations to help inform festival planning and suggest environmental programs (e.g., Pollinate Barrie, Clean Up Barrie, etc.).
7. Identify ways to reduce the environmental impact of the festival:
 - a. *This could include pursuing grants and earmarking funds to transition temporary power infrastructure into renewable sources.*
8. Collaborate with the City of Barrie on vendor familiarization and single-use plastic reduction/removal initiatives, such as information sharing, fee reduction for waste-cap.
 - a. *This could include getting support from Living Green Barrie.*

Long-term

9. Set a goal to be a single-use and waste-free festival by 2031, and celebrate initiatives and progress.
10. Facilitate a space or platform (e.g., advisory committee) for festival organizers to inform city planning processes and future infrastructure projects and improvements based on their needs and festival/event locations. **(City of Barrie)**
11. Encourage environmental protection and enhancement of festivals through grant incentives with dedicated environmental targets **(City of Barrie)**
 - a. *Provide service infrastructure grants for the festival to reduce single-use materials and transition to more environmentally friendly materials.*
12. Work with festival organizers to develop waste-free policies and set a city-wide goal for fully removing single-use plastics and other waste from festivals by 2030 **(City of Barrie)**.
13. Collaborate on a communications campaign to highlight the social and environmental benefits of festivals and events in Barrie **(City of Barrie)**.
 - a. *Source and feature positive volunteer(ing) stories to include in city communications and encourage community engagement.*

Partnerships and Collaborations

Ongoing

1. Strengthen existing and explore new partnerships with local Indigenous leadership, groups, and communities.
2. Continue to explore opportunities to improve transportation options to the festival (e.g., shuttle service, Metrolinx, Ontario by Bike, etc.)
3. Continue to work and explore new opportunities with industry associations, organizations, and groups (incl., local cultural groups)

Medium-term

4. Grow local economic impact by partnering directly with local businesses and representative organizations to develop festival packages, etc.
5. Formalize the relationship with the City of Barrie by developing a memorandum of understanding for clarity on support and expected reporting needs.
6. Formalize the relationship with Tourism Barrie by developing a memorandum of understanding for support with marketing planning and inclusion in marketing efforts.
7. Formalize the relationship with the Downtown Barrie BIA through a memorandum of understanding for clear network access to local businesses and potential support in package or special promotion creation.

Long-term

8. Continue to collaborate with social representation organizations to provide vendor and volunteer opportunities to underrepresented community members (incl. Barrie Pride, Barrie Native Friendship Centre, Women and Children's Shelter of Barrie).

