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Item No. 9.1.1
Special Events Advisory Committee
August 12, 2026

TO: Chair and Members of Special Events Advisory Committee

FROM: Jacqueline Hamilton, Commissioner of Operations

DATE: July 15, 2026

SUBJECT: Major Events Policy Framework

ORIGIN

October 1, 2024, Regional Council motion 15.3.1

MOVED by Councillor Kent, seconded by Councillor Lovelace THAT Halifax Regional Council request the Chief Administrative Officer work with Discover Halifax to develop a major event policy framework.

MOTION PUT AND PASSED UNANIMOUSLY

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report presents the *Major Event & Growth Policy Framework*, a unified, values-based approach to how the Halifax Regional Municipality (HRM) supports, attracts, and grows events across all scales, with a primary focus on major and strategic event opportunities. It establishes clear roles for HRM as funder and policy steward, and for Discover Halifax as strategic partner leading event attraction and development. It also defines expectations for event producers receiving public support, including alignment with municipal values and accountability for outcomes.

The purpose is to align funding, service levels, and policy decisions with event scale, community impact, and Council priorities. It ensures fairness, transparency, and strategic growth across the event sector. The Framework replaces fragmented programs under Administrative Order 2014-020-GOV with a coordinated structure that links event policy to the pending Halifax Regional Event Strategy and the Integrated Tourism Master Plan (ITMP 2030).

Implementation will be funded within existing approved budgets, primarily through the Marketing Levy Special Event Reserve (MLSER). Any additional costs related to new program development or evaluation tools will be outlined in subsequent staff reports.

The Framework reduces operational and reputational risk by establishing clear criteria, accountability, and evaluation measures for municipal participation in events.

RECOMMENDATION ON PAGE 2

RECOMMENDATION

It is recommended that Special Events Advisory Committee recommend Regional Council:

1. endorse the Major Event and Growth Policy Framework, attached as Attachment 1 to this Report, as the guiding document for how the Municipality proactively supports, attracts, and grows major events, establishing shared values and clear expectations for municipal participation;

2. endorse the development of the Event Attraction and Portfolio Strategy, which is a component of the Framework and led by Discover Halifax in collaboration with HRM, as the mechanism to identify, prioritize, and advance event opportunities consistent with the Framework.

3. direct the Chief Administrative Officer (CAO) to work with Discover Halifax to prepare and return to Regional Council with:

(a) proposed amendments to Administrative Order 2014-020-GOV (Marketing Levy Special Event Reserve Grants) as set forth in this Report; and

(b) Draft detailed policy instruments required under the Framework, as set forth in this Report;

4. authorize staff to apply the guiding values and principles of the Framework as reference points for event planning and funding decisions in the interim, pending full policy adoption; and,

5. direct staff to report annually through the Special Events Advisory Committee (SEAC) on progress implementing the Framework, including updates to policies, performance metrics, and event impact outcomes.

BACKGROUND

In September 2022, Regional Council requested a staff report on the potential development of a framework to establish and enforce standards, policies, and procedures for major events that define expectations for organizers hosting events in HRM. Halifax Regional Municipality Administrative Order Number 2014-020-GOV defines “Major Hosting Event” as, “a national or international event that typically does not recur annually in the same location and is awarded to a host destination through a competitive bidding process.” This work also incorporates and builds on recommendations from the 2019 Major Events review (STAT Pro), which identified the need for a unified policy framework and dedicated leadership to improve Halifax’s competitiveness and coordination in the major events sector.

In keeping with their agreement with the municipality, Discover Halifax led an initial review of major event guidelines through consultant GM Event Inc., working closely with municipal staff to assess existing systems and agreements supporting major events, best practices in event support and policy, and to capture stakeholder feedback on municipal roles and expectations. After public engagement and direct interviews with key stakeholders, this work concluded with the recommendation to create a values-based policy framework to guide consistent decision-making and align municipal participation with public priorities.

On October 1, 2024, Regional Council directed the CAO work with Discover Halifax to develop a major event policy framework. Discover Halifax subsequently issued a Request for Proposals for consultation services and integrated the development of the Halifax Regional Event Strategy and Major Event Policy Framework into a single coordinated project to ensure alignment between strategy and policy. The Halifax Regional Event Strategy 2035 (HRES), approved by Regional Council in March 2026, establishes the long-term vision and priorities for Halifax’s event ecosystem. The Major Event & Growth Policy Framework implements that strategy by guiding how the Municipality evaluates, supports, and invests in event opportunities.

In April 2025, the consulting team of Daylight Inc., Purple Moon Events, McLean Events, and Eventyr was selected to lead the project. These consultants had international experience with successful bids winning the Women's World Cup, Tour De France, Commonwealth Games and created Strategies for Event Scotland, Auckland (New Zealand), British Columbia, and many other leading event regions across the globe.

The engagement process was extensive and collaborative. A project team representing HRM Events, Discover Halifax, Events East, and Events Nova Scotia guided the process. The research process included 1:1 interviews with 22 key stakeholders, five group workshops, 11 focus groups with leaders in specific genres of events and culture, plus over 100 documents reviewed from past strategies to current Administrative Orders that guide the event ecosystem in HRM.

Risk Management and the Shift to Values-Based Policy

Through Phase 1 of the joint project to develop the Halifax Regional Event Strategy and Major Event & Growth Policy Framework (2023–2024), undertaken jointly by HRM and Discover Halifax, operational and reputational risks were identified in the existing system. Findings from the engagement provided feedback on the issues that triggered initial consideration of a framework, but also pointed to an environment of fragmented programs, inconsistent decision-making, overlapping roles, and limited coordination across departments. These challenges created uncertainty for event organizers and reduced Halifax's ability to act strategically or competitively.

In response, Council's motion of October 1, 2024 (Item 15.3.1, *Major Event Policy Framework*) directed staff to develop a unified, values-based framework to address these risks. The framework adopts a risk-management approach, prioritizing consistency, fairness, and defensible decision-making, while allowing flexibility for a diverse event landscape.

Rather than a regulatory model, the framework uses contractual and civil mechanisms such as funding agreements, contribution terms, and performance reporting, as its primary enforcement tools. This ensures accountability and public confidence without imposing unnecessary regulatory burden.

The framework is also a key action item in year one of the recently approved Regional Event Strategy that was in front of Council and approved unanimously March 25, 2026. This framework will support the strategy in ensuring we are able to fund and support events through the three key pillars of the strategy: Assets, Authenticity and Alignment.

DISCUSSION

Events in Halifax

Events are strategic instruments that can help advance Council's broader objectives. When supported intentionally, they promote inclusion, sustainability, and reconciliation, and animate public life year-round. They also provide platforms for creativity and volunteerism, building community capacity and contributing to Halifax's long-term prosperity.

Halifax's event landscape has grown in scale and complexity, revealing inconsistencies in how partners coordinate, fund, and evaluate events. Programs have evolved incrementally rather than through a unified strategy.

The Major Event & Growth Policy Framework addresses these challenges by establishing a single, values-based foundation for how Halifax supports, attracts, and grows events.

Why This Framework: Safety, Accountability, and Public Confidence

Beyond competitiveness, the *Major Event & Growth Policy Framework* responds to a broader shift in how events are governed across Canada. In recent years, there has been increased emphasis on safety, inclusion, accessibility, and accountability in sport and major event delivery. National initiatives such as the *Future of Sport in Canada Commission* and the *Safe Sport* movement have accelerated expectations for participant protection and ethical oversight.

This shift has been mirrored in increased attention to Occupational Health and Safety, accessibility, and respectful workplace standards. It also aligns with HRM's broader commitments to Truth and Reconciliation, equity, and inclusion, reinforcing the expectation that publicly supported events operate with respect for diverse communities and shared spaces.

These evolving expectations are reflected in the Framework, which establishes safety, inclusion, accessibility, accountability, and respect for diverse communities as conditions of municipal support.

By adopting a values-based and transparent framework, Halifax reflects leading practice in municipal event governance.

Why This Framework: Competitiveness and Readiness

Through engagement with event rights holders and leaders who have successfully secured major events for Halifax, a consistent theme emerged: the current funding and approval processes are not competitive with the pace of today's event marketplace. While Halifax's event ecosystem is strong, its ability to compete for major hosting opportunities is constrained by decision-making timelines that do not align with national and international bid requirements. Many opportunities require confirmed funding commitments or host-fee guarantees at the time of submission.

Under the current structure, HRM cannot always provide those commitments because funding remains contingent on later application and approval processes. This creates uncertainty for event organizers and limits Halifax's competitiveness in securing strategic event opportunities. Existing processes, including Administrative Order 2014-020-GOV, were not designed for the pace and responsiveness increasingly required to compete for major events.

The need for improved competitiveness and readiness is reinforced in both the Halifax Regional Event Strategy 2035 (HRES) and the Integrated Tourism Master Plan (ITMP 2030). Both identify proactive attraction, coordinated governance, and timely decision-making as essential to attracting, developing, and growing major event opportunities.

These operational challenges are reflected in the Framework, which establishes a consistent policy foundation for timely, transparent, and coordinated decision-making in support of major event opportunities.

By adopting a proactive and values-based framework, Halifax strengthens its readiness to compete for and support major events while maintaining accountability for public investment.

Why These Values: The Foundation of Public Trust

The *Major Event & Growth Policy Framework* is built on twelve guiding values that act as practical decision filters rather than broad statements of intent. These values establish the standards for municipal support and guide the evaluation of event opportunities.

The values were informed by stakeholder engagement and environmental scans, reflecting consistent themes and priorities identified across consultation.

Each value aligns with HRM's broader commitments to equity, sustainability, safety, reconciliation, and fiscal accountability, ensuring consistency with Council's strategic priorities.

Inclusive Access	Safety & Wellbeing	Community Resonance
Accessibility	Respect for Place	Economic & Tourism Impact
Inclusion & Representation	Sustainability & Resilience	Legacy & Lasting Benefit
Reconciliation	Cultural Vibrancy	Public Stewardship & Accountability

Scope of the Framework

The *Major Event & Growth Policy Framework* applies to bid events, major hosting opportunities, and strategic initiatives that grow or enhance Halifax's event portfolio. It also guides proactive investment in new event creation and enabling projects that strengthen the municipality's capacity to attract and deliver major events.

The Framework supports a proactive, opportunity-driven approach developed in collaboration with Discover Halifax and sector partners. It does not apply to existing signature or community event programs that provide ongoing operational support through other municipal funding streams.

Strategic Alignment

The *Major Event & Growth Policy Framework* connects municipal event policy to Halifax's broader strategic direction and ensures consistency across related plans.

Council's Strategic Priorities Plan

- Supports the themes of Enabling Prosperity + Strengthening Communities
- Positions events as economic drivers and expressions of civic identity + inclusivity, reinforcing long-term municipal objectives

Halifax Regional Event Strategy (HRES)

- Provides the long-term vision for Halifax's event ecosystem
- This Framework is the policy mechanism that will operationalize that vision

Integrated Tourism Master Plan (ITMP 2030)

- Aligns with the *Vibrant, Alive 365* priority for year-round activation, marquee events, and event-space development.
- Coordinates event and tourism policy to advance both community and economic goals.

Strategic Context: Governance Expectations under the Halifax Regional Event Strategy 2035

The Halifax Regional Event Strategy 2035 sets an ambitious vision of Halifax as Canada's Favourite Gathering Place. This vision implies an event ecosystem that is intentional, coordinated, and capable of delivering consistent public benefit across cultural, community, tourism, and economic objectives.

A central implication of the Strategy is a shift in how governance and policy are expected to function. Under the Strategy, governance bodies are expected to enable shared direction and outcomes across the event system, rather than primarily authorizing individual transactions. This reflects a move away from case-by-case approvals toward greater emphasis on intent-setting, earlier risk consideration, and oversight of outcomes over time.

The three pillars clarify the nature of this shift:

Authenticity
Events are expected to meaningfully reflect Halifax's people, cultures, and places, requiring clear intent about what public investment is meant to support.

Assets
Events are to be planned in relation to venues, public spaces, infrastructure, and sector capacity, which requires coordination beyond individual applications.

Alignment
Roles, decisions, and investments are expected to be coordinated toward shared outcomes, rather than determined independently or transaction by transaction.

This approach is reflected in several Strategy priorities that directly relate to governance and policy:

- Priority 10 – Strengthen the backbone and governance
  Calls for clear mandates, defined roles, and governance structures that support coordinated, outcome-driven decision-making.
- Priority 15 – Enact and evolve a Major Event & Growth Policy Framework
  Identifies the need for policy mechanisms that enable proactive, values-based decision-making rather than reactive approvals.
- Priority 13 – Develop and apply an impact framework
  Establishes the expectation that success be assessed consistently at a system level, beyond individual event outcomes.
- Priority 14 – Build public trust and understanding
  Emphasizes transparency, consistency, and clarity in how and why events are supported.
- Priority 3 – Transform event funding programs
  Signals that funding approaches must better reflect strategic intent, community outcomes, and long-term objectives.

Together, these priorities position governance to operate at a system and portfolio level, setting direction in advance and enabling implementation within clear parameters.

Implementation and Operation

Event funding continues to operate under Administrative Order 2014-020-GOV Marketing Levy Special Event Reserve Grants (AO), which provides the authority for allocating municipal funding to events.

To align with the Framework and Halifax Regional Event Strategy 2035, staff intend to return with changes to the AO to replace existing program categories with a single general funding program that references the Framework as the governing policy.

The Administrative Order will continue to support the use of the Reserve, such as eligibility for municipal funding and application requirements. It is anticipated that detailed program design, evaluation, and procedures will be set through implementation and supporting tools maintained under the Framework.

Level	Element	Role	Status
Strategy	Halifax Regional Event Strategy (HRES 2035)	Sets long term vision and priorities.	Approved (March 2026)
Policy	Major Event & Growth Policy Framework	Defines values and approach	This report
Legal Authority	Administrative Order (AO 2014-020-GOV)	Provides authority to allocate funding	Existing (to be amended)
Implementation	Program Directive	Establish funding programs,	Future (Council approval

		eligibility criteria, evaluation processes, and operating procedures.	required)
Supporting Tool	Impact Framework	Defines performance measures, evaluation methods, and reporting standards.	Future
	Event Attraction & Portfolio Strategy	Identifies strategic priorities and focus areas for major events, guiding proactive attraction and portfolio development.	Future

Program Directives
Program Directives translate the Framework's principles into operational procedures. They set eligibility criteria, application and review processes, documentation standards, and performance requirements. They guide how existing authorities are exercised but do not create or extend financial authority.

Supporting Tools
Implementation is supported by:

- Event Attraction & Portfolio Strategy: Developed by Discover Halifax in partnership with HRM and endorsed by SEAC, the Strategy translates the Framework's policy direction into strategic investment priorities. It guides the identification, attraction, and development of major event opportunities, helping to focus municipal investment on opportunities that align with Council priorities and the long-term objectives of the Halifax Regional Event Strategy; and
- Impact Framework: Developed and jointly maintained by HRM and Discover Halifax, and endorsed by SEAC, the Impact Framework establishes a consistent approach to evaluating supported events. It defines common performance measures, reporting standards, and evaluation methods to assess community, tourism, cultural, and economic outcomes while supporting accountability for public investment.

Review and Reporting
The Special Events Advisory Committee (SEAC) will review the supporting tools and any proposed Program Directives before they are brought forward to Council. SEAC will also receive annual progress reports on implementation and event outcomes.

Future Implementation Considerations
Additional mechanisms may be developed through future Administrative Order amendments or Council direction to support a more proactive and responsible approach to event investment. Such future developments may include:

- Portfolio Pre-Approvals: Council may consider pre-approved funding envelopes for event categories, allowing staff to confirm participation or bid commitments within approved limits and report back following confirmation.
- Staff Authorizations: Defined spending and decision authorities may be formalized under the Administrative Order to enable timely execution of approved programs within existing allocations. Program Directives would govern how these authorities are exercised, ensuring accountability and consistency with approved policy.

Transition
Until the Administrative Order amendments and related tools are approved, existing programs remain in effect.

Roles and Expectations

The Framework defines distinct responsibilities for the partners involved in Halifax's event ecosystem:

- HRM: Policy steward, event support, service provider, and primary funder. HRM applies the Framework's guiding values, allocates municipal resources, and coordinates services that support event delivery.
- Regional Council: approves the Framework, Program Directives, funding allocations, and major event commitments.
- Special Events Advisory Committee (SEAC): Reviews supporting tools, proposed Program Directives, funding recommendations, and performance reports, and provides recommendations to Regional Council on implementation, funding allocations, major event commitments, and the continued evolution of the Framework.
- Discover Halifax: HRM's strategic partner under a municipal service agreement. Leads and coordinates event attraction, development, and portfolio planning through the *Event Attraction & Portfolio Strategy*, and provides analysis, performance measurement, and reporting support to HRM through staff, SEAC, and Council.
- Event Organizers: Accountable for planning and delivering events in accordance with the Framework and related agreements. Expected to demonstrate alignment with Halifax's values and community standards, operate safely and inclusively, and meet post-event reporting requirements.

Governance and Roles

As HRM considers a more proactive, values-based approach to events, the governance role of SEAC becomes increasingly important. In this context, governance is not defined by involvement in individual funding decisions alone, but by stewardship of municipal intent: articulating priorities, confirming alignment with shared values, and overseeing how public investment contributes to strategic objectives. This represents an evolution from a primarily transactional focus toward a governance role centered on direction-setting, accountability, and continuous improvement.

Clarifying governance roles also supports a more effective separation of functions across the system. In a proactive and portfolio-oriented approach, different functions play distinct roles:

- Strategic intent and priorities are established through governance.
- Analysis and evidence inform decision-making; and
- Implementation occurs within the parameters set by Council.

This approach responds directly to feedback identified through engagement, including from advisory bodies, delivery partners, and event organizers, which emphasized the desire for governance bodies to focus on the "why" of municipal participation in events—what types of opportunities are sought, what outcomes are expected, and how success is understood, rather than the administrative details of individual applications. It also supports earlier, more informed decision-making by establishing shared expectations in advance, enabling staff and partners to act proactively while remaining accountable to Council-approved direction.

Accountability and Risk Management

The Framework directly addresses the governance and reputational risks identified in the Framework for Major Events Report, by establishing a consistent and enforceable governance structure. Accountability is achieved through procedural, contractual, and civil mechanisms rather than regulation. This ensures proportional accountability tied to the scale of funding and the public interest. Oversight through the Special Events Advisory Committee (SEAC) ensures decisions remain transparent, measurable, and aligned with HRM's risk management approach.

Conclusion

The *Major Event & Growth Policy Framework* fulfills Council's direction to create a clear, proactive, and defensible system for how Halifax supports, attracts, and grows events. It establishes a single, coordinated

structure that links policy, accountability, and strategic investment under shared values.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

No financial implications at this time.

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

Stakeholder engagement was undertaken through the *Halifax Regional Event Strategy and Major Event & Growth Policy Framework Project* between April and September 2025. More than 150 participants contributed through interviews, surveys, workshops, and focus groups involving event organizers, tourism operators, economic development partners, and representatives from government and the cultural sector.

The process included 24 one-on-one interviews, 4 sector workshops, 11 focus groups, and 4 surveys, including a public survey with 275 responses from across the Halifax region. Engagement focused on sport, culture, music, tourism, and business sectors, with targeted outreach to Mi'kmaw, Acadian, francophone, and African Nova Scotian organizations active in the events and tourism ecosystem.

Feedback from these sessions informed the development of both the *Halifax Regional Event Strategy 2035* and the *Major Event & Growth Policy Framework*, shaping their shared values, governance approach, and implementation priorities.

LEGISLATIVE AUTHORITY

***Halifax Regional Municipality Charter,* S.N.S. 2008, c. 39, as amended**:

7A The purposes of the Municipality are to
(a) provide good government;
(b) provide services, facilities and other things that, in the opinion of the Council, are necessary or desirable for all or part of the Municipality; and
(c) develop and maintain safe and viable communities.

29A(2) The Council may by by-law impose a marketing levy upon a person who, for a daily charge, fee or remuneration purchases accommodation in the Municipality.

(5) The marketing levy collected pursuant to this Section may be only used by the Council to promote tourism.

(6) Without restricting the generality of subsection (5) and notwithstanding subsection 71(2) or any other enactment, the Council may pay such portion of the marketing levy collected by way of a grant, as determined by the Council, to any organization formed to promote tourism, whether such organization is non-profit or otherwise.

79A (1) Subject to subsections (2) to (4), the Municipality may only spend money for municipal purposes if
(a) the expenditure is included in the Municipality's operating budget or capital budget or is otherwise authorized by the Municipality;
(b) the expenditure is in respect of an emergency under the Emergency Management Act; or \
(c) the expenditure is legally required to be paid.

ADMINISTRATIVE ORDER NUMBER 2014-020-GOV Respecting Marketing Levy Special Event Reserve Grants

Schedule 1 Special Events Advisory Committee Terms of Reference

Section 4.1 Advise Regional Council on all matters related to the allocation of the MLSER;

Section 4.2 Continue to review eligibility criteria, priorities, policy and procedures for assistance under the respective programs and services managed under the auspices of the Marketing Levy Special Events Reserve Administrative Order 2014-020-GOV;

ATTACHMENT

Attachment – 2025 Major Event and Growth Policy Framework

Report Prepared by: Billy Comer, Manager, Events, 902.943-3810

Halifax Regional Municipality

MAJOR EVENTS & GROWTH POLICY FRAMEWORK

Prepared by:
HRM Events Division, in partnership with Discover Halifax

Version: 1.0

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1. Purpose & Intent

The Major Event & Growth Policy Framework establishes the foundation for how Halifax Regional Municipality (HRM) directs public investment in events as a driver of tourism, community, cultural, and economic growth.

This Framework affirms that events are strategic tools that advance municipal and regional priorities—fostering inclusion, reconciliation, sustainability, and civic pride while contributing to Halifax's reputation, prosperity, and quality of life.

Implementation of the Framework is supported through collaboration with key partners, including Discover Halifax, which serves as HRM's strategic delivery partner for event development and attraction. Other partners—including Events East, the Province of Nova Scotia, and event organizers—play complementary roles in advancing shared objectives.

The Framework establishes that Halifax's approach to events is proactive and strategic—focused on identifying, attracting, and growing events that align with community values and long-term regional priorities.

The intent of the Framework is to:

- Define the municipality's enduring values and policy principles for major event investment;
- Provide clear direction for transparent, coordinated decision-making;
- Position events as tools for growth and development, guiding intentional and proactive investment and attraction;
- Set shared expectations for HRM, partners, and event producers regarding values, responsibilities, and outcomes; and
- Align event support with HRM's broader tourism, cultural, and economic development strategies and policies.

By establishing a consistent foundation for collaboration, the Framework strengthens public confidence, mitigates reputational and operational risks, and ensures that all partners act in alignment with shared community values.

It serves as an enabling policy under Administrative Order 2014-020-GOV (Marketing Levy Special Event Reserve Grants) and may inform other municipal funding programs or partnerships that support event development and growth. The Framework ensures that public investments in events reflect shared values, deliver measurable benefits, and strengthen Halifax's identity as an inclusive, sustainable, and welcoming destination.

Why Events Matter

Events are where Halifax's culture, economy, and community intersect.They are among the few public investments that create simultaneous civic, cultural, and economic outcomes—driving tourism, strengthening community connection, and projecting Halifax's identity to the world.

Events stimulate activity across sectors, attract investment, and enhance Halifax's reputation nationally and internationally. Equally, they reflect the city's people, stories, and values—shaping identity and reinforcing the habits of gathering that define civic life.

Through events, Halifax both welcomes visitors and celebrates itself, coming together in moments of joy, reflection, and achievement. This Framework ensures that when the Municipality supports those moments, it does so with clarity, fairness, and respect for the values of the community it represents.This shared understanding of why events matter underpins every element of the Framework—from how opportunities are identified to how outcomes are measured.

2. Scope & Application

The Major Event & Growth Policy Framework establishes a proactive and strategic approach to municipal event investment. It directs HRM's efforts toward the identification, attraction, development, and enhancement of events that advance shared community priorities. Investments are opportunity-driven, initiated through strategic analysis and partner collaboration rather than reactive intake.

This Framework applies to activities through which Halifax Regional Municipality (HRM) actively supports, attracts, develops, or enhances events within the Halifax region. It defines the range of event types, initiatives, and municipal functions covered by the Framework and provides consistent guidance for how HRM resources are used to advance tourism, cultural, community, and economic objectives through events.

The Framework applies across the full bid-to-host cycle—from opportunity identification and bidding through hosting, delivery, and legacy—and encompasses both financial and non-financial support provided by HRM.

Covered Activities

Opportunities supported under this Framework are developed proactively through collaboration among HRM, Discover Halifax, and sector partners. Each category below reflects a pathway for strategic investment, not a program of open application.

The Framework applies broadly to:

- *Major Events* – large-scale events of regional, national, or international significance that require municipal involvement or coordination;
- *Bid and Hosted Events* – one-time or recurring events for which Halifax competes to host or provides formal hosting support;
- *Growth and Enhancement Initiatives* – collaborations with existing or emerging events to expand reach, quality, or impact where there is strategic potential;
- *Event Development and Creation* – intentional and proactive investment in new event concepts, delivery models, or enabling initiatives that demonstrate potential for long-term community, cultural, or economic benefit; and
- *Event-Related Enabling Infrastructure and Legacy Investments* – temporary, portable, or small-scale facility or equipment enhancements that improve event readiness or hosting capacity, including shared-use assets that support multiple events over time.

The Framework recognizes both financial and non-financial forms of municipal support, including operational services, public safety and regulatory coordination, and collaboration across HRM departments and agencies to enable successful event delivery.

The Framework applies to events taking place within the Halifax Regional Municipality. In exceptional cases where events outside HRM require municipal operational coordination or support, this Framework may guide HRM's involvement as appropriate.

Relationship to Other Municipal Programs

This Framework operates alongside HRM's other community and cultural event funding programs, which were established to provide stable operating support for established festivals and events. These programs continue to be the primary mechanism through which HRM sustains locally produced festivals and events.

Participation by locally established events in growth or enhancement initiatives under this Framework is intended to complement—not replace—existing operating support provided through those or other

municipal programs. Funding relationships under separate programs remain independent unless otherwise defined within a specific Program Directive.

Funding and Exclusions

Funding decisions under this Framework are made in accordance with Administrative Order 2014-020-GOV (Marketing Levy Special Event Reserve Grants) as updated from time to time. The Framework may also guide related municipal or partner investments that align with its objectives.

Eligibility and exclusions for municipal funding and support are governed by the Administrative Order.

Specific supporting strategies, frameworks, and program directives developed under this policy are described in Section 5: Implementation and Enabling Mechanisms.

3. Guiding Vision & Values

Vision

Events in Halifax reflect the shared values and aspirations of a welcoming, sustainable, and vibrant community. They strengthen civic pride, build connections among people and cultures, and project Halifax's identity and creativity to the world.

The Major Event & Growth Policy Framework ensures that public investment in events is guided by a consistent set of principles that reflect both community priorities and the responsibilities of public stewardship. These values define the standards for support and are interpreted proportionally to the scale, character, and purpose of each event. They are guiding principles—not a prescriptive checklist—and together they shape how events are planned, supported, and delivered.

Values

Inclusive Access
Events are welcoming and open in spirit and design. Access and participation are fair and intentional, enabling broad involvement, while respecting the purpose and structure of each event.

Accessibility
Events enable participation by people of all abilities. They meet or exceed accessibility standards and actively remove barriers that limit inclusion.

Inclusion & Representation
Events reflect the full diversity of Halifax's people and communities—past, present, and emerging. They recognize and include African Nova Scotian, Mi'kmaw, Acadian, Gaelic, 2SLGBTQIA+, newcomer, and other diverse communities, creating space for participation and visibility in ways appropriate to each event's scale and character.

Reconciliation
Events take place on the traditional territory of the Mi'kmaq people. Reconciliation requires that events honour this truth and demonstrate respect for Mi'kmaw culture, heritage, and ongoing presence.

Safety & Well-being
Safety and well-being are essential to public trust in events. Events protect the physical, psychological, and cultural safety for all participants.

Respect for Place
Events respect Halifax's geography, natural features, and civic spaces. They use public places responsibly, engage respectfully with the residents and communities they affect, and leave sites and

surroundings in as good as or better condition than they were found.

Sustainability & Resilience
Events demonstrate environmental responsibility through sustainable planning and delivery. They reduce waste and emissions, use resources wisely, and contribute to Halifax's broader climate and resilience goals.

Cultural Vibrancy
Events strengthen Halifax's cultural identity by celebrating its stories, creativity, and traditions. They contribute to a thriving cultural ecosystem and respect the artists and professionals whose efforts make that possible.

Community Resonance
Events are relevant to Halifax's people, culture, and sense of place. They build on local strengths, foster pride and participation, and have a clear connection or benefit to the community.

Economic & Tourism Impact
Events generate economic benefit, attract visitors, and enhance Halifax's reputation as a vibrant and welcoming destination. Public investment in events contribute to shared prosperity and long-term growth.

Legacy & Lasting Benefit
Events leave positive and lasting benefits—whether through infrastructure, skills, reputation, civic pride, or strengthened community connections. Their value extends beyond the immediate moment.

Public Stewardship & Accountability
Public investment in events requires integrity, transparency, and accountability. Funds, spaces, and public trust must be managed responsibly and demonstrate clear value to the community.

Interpretation Note

These values are applied proportionately to the scale, nature, and purpose of each event. Community-based and large-scale events are expected to demonstrate alignment in ways that are appropriate to their context and capacity.

Baseline Standards

All events supported under this Framework are expected to operate in good standing and to meet the following minimum conditions for eligibility and continued support:

- *Legal Compliance*: Events must operate in full compliance with all applicable laws, regulations, and required permits.
- *Safe Conduct*: Events must demonstrate active measures to prevent harassment, discrimination, or abuse—including gender-based, sexual, racial, cultural, or other forms of misconduct—and must comply with all applicable human rights, Safe Sport, and occupational health and safety standards.
- *Good Standing*: Events and their organizers must remain in good standing with the Halifax Regional Municipality, the Province of Nova Scotia, and other relevant public authorities, including the fulfillment of all financial, contractual, and reporting obligations.
- *Non-Partisanship*: Public funding will not be provided to events where participation, promotion, or association could reasonably be perceived as endorsement of a political party, government, or ideological position unrelated to the event's cultural, economic, or community purpose.

Application

Together, these values and standards provide a consistent foundation for decision-making, evaluation, and program development under this Framework. They guide how funding criteria, program directives,

and event assessments are designed, ensuring that Halifax's investments in events reflect shared community priorities and public trust.

4. Governance, Collaboration, and Roles

The Major Event & Growth Policy Framework establishes a clear structure of roles, responsibilities, and expectations among municipal bodies, strategic partners, and event producers.

These roles provide the basis for decision-making, funding, and operational support, ensuring that all parties act in a coordinated, transparent, and accountable manner.

Governance Overview

This Framework operates within the Halifax Regional Municipality's existing governance structure. Regional Council is the final decision-making authority, advised by the Special Events Advisory Committee (SEAC). HRM is the policy steward and primary allocator of resources. Discover Halifax and other partners play coordinated strategic and operational roles, as outlined in this section.

Principles of Collaboration

Collaboration is central to Halifax's event ecosystem. HRM and its partners share responsibility for enabling events through cooperation, transparency, and problem-solving. The following principles guide how partners work together under this Framework:

- *Partnership*: Decisions are made through dialogue and mutual respect for each partner's mandate, expertise, and capacity.
- *Timeliness*: Processes are designed to support efficient, coordinated decisions that reflect the pace and opportunity of the event marketplace.
- *Transparency*: Roles, expectations, and decision rationales are documented and communicated clearly to all stakeholders.
- *Shared Outcomes*: All partners align efforts toward outcomes that advance Halifax's collective cultural, social, and economic goals.
- *Agility*: Processes and decision-making are designed to enable timely, collaborative responses to opportunity, supporting Halifax's competitiveness in attracting and delivering events.

These principles reinforce a culture of partnership and shared accountability, ensuring that Halifax's approach to event development remains coordinated, transparent, and responsive to opportunity.

Roles and Responsibilities

Halifax Regional Municipality (HRM)

- *Policy Owner and Funder*: HRM is the steward of this Framework and the primary allocator of municipal resources, including financial support, public spaces, and enabling services.
- *Council as Decision-Maker*: Halifax Regional Council, advised by the Special Events Advisory Committee (SEAC), is the final decision-making body for public funding and other major commitments under this Framework.
- *Delegated Authority*: Within Council-approved programs, budgets, and criteria, municipal staff may exercise delegated authority to approve funding or operational support. This authority enables Halifax to remain responsive and competitive in attracting and supporting events.
- *Enabler of Events*: HRM delivers services and supports through its departments and agencies—including permitting, access to municipal spaces, civic operations, transit, transportation, and public safety (police, fire, and emergency services). These services are expected to act as

enablers—working collaboratively with event organizers to provide coordinated support, reduce barriers, and find solutions that make events possible, safe, and aligned with the guiding values.
- *Oversight and Accountability*: HRM approves performance frameworks and ensures all funding, reporting, and evaluation processes meet Council-approved standards and public accountability requirements.

Discover Halifax

- *Strategic Delivery Partner*: Discover Halifax serves as HRM's strategic delivery partner for event attraction and development under the municipal service agreement.
- *Portfolio Strategy Lead*: Leads the development and application of the Event Attraction and Portfolio Strategy, proactively identifying and advancing opportunities that align with Halifax's long-term strategic objectives.
- *Advisor to HRM and Council*: Applies the portfolio strategy and guiding values to provide advice on the strategic value, feasibility, and growth potential of event opportunities, ensuring Council decisions reflect both community benefit and market potential.
- *Support to Events*: Provides advisory services, marketing partnerships, and reporting functions to supported events, maximizing their reach, impact, and alignment with Halifax's brand and goals.
- *Analysis, Reporting & Metrics*: Leads the development and use of analysis, reporting, and metrics to inform decisions, measure outcomes, and guide future investments.

Strategic and Operational Partners
Halifax's event ecosystem relies on collaboration among event attraction partners, provincial agencies, venue and facility operators, sector organizations, and industry associations. Together, they contribute funding, expertise, infrastructure, attraction capacity, and alignment with broader tourism, cultural, and economic development priorities—ensuring Halifax competes effectively in national and international markets.

This coordinated network strengthens the region's collective ability to attract, deliver, and grow events, while maintaining HRM's leadership and accountability for public investment decisions.

Advisory and Coordinating Bodies

- *Special Events Advisory Committee (SEAC):* Advises Council on event funding and policy alignment, ensuring decisions reflect public value, fiscal accountability, and consistency with this Framework. SEAC also reviews regulatory and policy tools related to major events.
- *Special Events Task Force (SETF):* The SETF is HRM's coordinated mechanism for integrating event safety, risk management, and operational review across departments and agencies. It plays a key role in enabling events by balancing public safety with operational feasibility and community impact. This Framework applies to the SETF and any subsequent evolutions of this coordinating function.
- *Events Industry Advisory Group (EIAG):* Coordinated through Discover Halifax, EIAG provides an ongoing forum for engagement between HRM, industry partners, and event producers. It offers insight on sectoral trends, identifies barriers to growth, and informs the development of policy and program directives under this Framework. EIAG is convened periodically to ensure the event ecosystem remains connected, collaborative, and responsive to industry needs.

Community
The community plays a central role in the success of events.

Residents are not only participants and audiences, but also beneficiaries of the cultural, social, and economic impacts that events create. Community feedback, participation, and pride are critical to ensuring events are relevant, welcomed, and impactful.

Supported events are expected to demonstrate how benefits are shared broadly, fostering trust and reinforcing the value of public investment.

Event Rights Holders and Producers
Event organizers are expected to operate with integrity, deliver events that generate measurable benefits for Halifax, and demonstrate responsible use of public resources.

They are accountable for ensuring events are delivered safely, responsibly, and in a manner that enhances the community while meeting the commitments made in exchange for public support. Organizers are encouraged to work collaboratively with HRM, Discover Halifax, and other partners from the earliest stages of planning to align objectives and streamline support.

In return, rights holders and producers can expect transparent, coordinated processes from HRM and its partners. Funding and support decisions will be based on clear criteria and communicated through consistent channels. Organizers will have defined points of contact, access to guidance, and a fair, timely review process aligned with the principles of this Framework.

Together, these expectations create an environment of mutual accountability, respect, and shared purpose.

Shared Accountability

The success of this Framework depends on mutual accountability and active collaboration among all partners across the event ecosystem.

HRM provides authority and resources; Discover Halifax offers strategic guidance and integration; provincial and sector partners contribute critical assets; service agencies deliver enabling supports; producers create the event experiences; and the community provides legitimacy, participation, and feedback.

All parties share responsibility for upholding the guiding values and ensuring that Halifax's event portfolio delivers lasting benefits—including cultural vibrancy, economic return, community pride, and legacy infrastructure that strengthens the region for the future.

5. Implementation & Enabling Mechanisms

Administrative Order Alignment

This Framework is enabled through Administrative Order 2014-020-GOV, the *Marketing Levy Special Event Reserve Grants Administrative Order*, which provides the legal basis for the allocation of municipal resources to major events. The Administrative Order establishes the formal authority and approval processes for the use of the Marketing Levy Special Event Reserve (MLSER).

Under that authority, this Framework serves as the guiding policy document, defining the values, scope, and expectations that shape how those resources are applied. This separation ensures the Administrative Order remains a legal and procedural tool, while this Framework provides the enduring policy foundation for event investment and development.

Together, these instruments establish a clear hierarchy in Halifax's event investment system: the Administrative Order provides the legal authority, this Framework sets the overarching policy direction, and the supporting program directives and guidelines define the operational tools through which it is implemented.

Supporting Documents

This Framework is supported by a series of living documents that translate policy into action and respond to the priorities and actions identified through the Halifax Regional Event Strategy.

The Strategy serves as the catalyst for these tools, directing when new instruments—such as program directives or impact frameworks—are developed or updated. Each document has a distinct purpose, approval pathway, and update cycle, ensuring that the Framework remains responsive to evolving opportunities and community priorities.

Event Attraction & Portfolio Strategy
Outlines the proactive priorities and investment focus for Halifax's event portfolio. It identifies target sectors, event types, and strategic opportunities for attraction and growth. The Strategy is developed by Discover Halifax in partnership with HRM and endorsed by the Special Events Advisory Committee (SEAC) and Regional Council to confirm alignment with municipal objectives and public accountability.

Impact Framework
Establishes shared outcomes and measures of success for events supported under this Framework. It defines common methodologies, tools, and reporting standards for event evaluation. The Impact Framework is jointly developed and maintained by Discover Halifax and HRM and endorsed by the Special Events Advisory Committee (SEAC) to confirm alignment with municipal objectives and public accountability.

Program Directive
Defines the structure, intent, and eligibility criteria for a specific funding or support program. They are the primary tool that implements the proactive approach, defining how strategic event opportunities are identified, developed, and brought forward for investment consideration.

Program Directives are developed by Discover Halifax, in collaboration with HRM, in response to priorities identified through the Halifax Regional Event Strategy. Each Directive translates the Framework's values and policy intent into actionable programs that guide how municipal resources are allocated and administered.

Directives are endorsed by the Special Events Advisory Committee (SEAC) and approved by Regional Council, establishing both transparency and formal authority. They may be amended, replaced, or rescinded through the same process as strategies or priorities evolve.

Operational Guidelines
Provide detailed guidance for HRM staff and partners in the planning, permitting, and delivery of events. These may include process maps, contact protocols, or industry standards for safety, accessibility, and sustainability. Operational Guidelines are maintained by HRM staff and do not require approval, allowing updates as operational practices and industry standards evolve.

Additional or Complementary Frameworks
From time to time, additional frameworks or strategies may be created under this Policy Framework to address specific dimensions of Halifax's event ecosystem—such as legacy planning, volunteer engagement, or hosting excellence.

These frameworks, strategies, or tools are jointly prepared by Discover Halifax and HRM, in collaboration with relevant partners, ensuring continuity with the policy intent of this Framework.

They are aligned with its guiding values and governance structure and are endorsed by the Special Events Advisory Committee (SEAC) to confirm public accountability and consistency. Where required, Regional Council approval may also be sought to establish formal authority or funding mechanisms.

Measurement & Evaluation

All events supported under this Framework are subject to consistent measurement and evaluation. Evaluation demonstrates alignment with the Framework's guiding values, the Event Attraction & Portfolio Strategy, accountability for public investment, and delivery of community and economic benefit.

Under provincial legislation, the Marketing Levy Special Event Reserve (MLSER) may only be used for activities that promote tourism. This Framework interprets that purpose to include initiatives that enhance Halifax's overall visitor appeal through civic, cultural, and community vibrancy alongside economic benefit.

Expectations for measurement are proportionate to the scale, complexity, and risk of each event.

Evaluation is multi-dimensional, recognizing that events create value across several interconnected areas, including:

- *Economic and Tourism Impact*: visitor attraction, spending, and contribution to economic development.
- *Community and Cultural Impact*: participation, inclusion, and alignment with Halifax's identity and values.
- *Media and Reputation Impact*: visibility and contribution to Halifax's brand and profile.
- *Sustainability and Resilience:* environmental responsibility and alignment with climate objectives.
- *Safety and Well-being*: safe, respectful, and accessible experiences for all participants.
- *Financial Accountability*: transparent and responsible management of public resources.

The Impact Framework, jointly maintained by HRM and Discover Halifax, defines the methodologies and reporting standards that support these principles and is endorsed by the Special Events Advisory Committee (SEAC) to ensure accountability and alignment with public expectations.

Event organizers must report against the Impact Framework as a condition of support. Responsibility for reporting rests with the organizer, while HRM and its delivery partners provide oversight, analysis, and public reporting.

Evaluation findings inform funding decisions, bid strategies, and growth priorities, and demonstrate the long-term value of public investment in Halifax's event ecosystem.

6. Review & Amendment

The Major Event & Growth Policy Framework provides a stable, long-term foundation for Halifax's event investment system. While the Framework is designed to endure, it must remain responsive to evolving community priorities, industry conditions, and municipal policy direction.

Review and Renewal

The Framework will be reviewed **periodically** or when significant changes in strategy, governance, or external conditions warrant it. A formal review may also occur in conjunction with the renewal of the *Halifax Regional Event Strategy* or at the direction of Regional Council.

Reviews will assess the Framework's continued relevance, alignment with municipal objectives, and effectiveness in guiding event investment and development.

Amendment Process

Amendments may be initiated through:

- Direction of Regional Council;
- Recommendations from the Special Events Advisory Committee (SEAC); or

- Joint review by HRM and Discover Halifax in response to emerging strategic or operational needs.

All amendments will be brought forward to Regional Council for approval, following SEAC review where applicable. HRM staff may make minor administrative or editorial updates that do not alter the policy intent to maintain consistency with related documents, terminology, or organizational structure.

Continuous Improvement

Findings from ongoing evaluation and reporting under the *Impact Framework* will inform future updates. Adjustments to supporting documents—such as Program Directives, Operational Guidelines, or complementary frameworks—may occur at any time, following their defined approval pathways, without requiring amendment to this Framework itself.

This approach ensures that Halifax's event investment system remains adaptable, transparent, and stable—capable of responding to opportunity while preserving long-term policy intent.

Appendix A – Event Categories & Definitions

Halifax's events are categorized to provide a shared understanding of scale, scope, and coordination needs.

These categories are descriptive—not prescriptive—and are intended to guide consistent communication, operational planning, and future policy or program development. They balance scale, scope, and impact with coordination requirements and serve as a reference for determining the proportional level of support and services appropriate under this Framework.

Note: Categories are not funding tiers. They describe scale and coordination requirements to support clear, proportional planning across HRM and its partners. Tier categorization does not imply lesser cultural, social, or economic value to Halifax. Signature designations or other recognitions may apply independently of these categories.

Category	Description	Typical Attendance	Scope	Footprint	Coordination	Impact / Legacy	Examples
MEGA EVENTS	Rare, globally significant opportunities requiring extraordinary planning and coordination across governments and institutions. Always involve competitive, international bidding and are transformational in scale. Maintained to align with international standards and ensure readiness for future opportunities.	250,000+	International or Global reach	Multi-venue; often requires purpose-built infrastructure	Extraordinary — cross-government, multi-year, generational planning	Transformative economic, cultural, and reputational legacy; may reshape civic facilities, community assets, or global positioning	Commonwealth Games; FIFA World Cup
MAJOR EVENTS	Nationally or internationally recognized events anchoring Halifax as a host city of choice. Create sustained visibility and may be competitively bid or recurring annual events of national or international significance.	50,000 – 200,000+	National or international significance	Multi-site or municipality-wide; multi-day duration	High — multiple HRM services, community partners, sometimes intergovernmental	National tourism and media reach; may involve venue upgrades or lasting legacies	Juno Awards; SailGP; World Junior Hockey Championship
TIER 1	Halifax's largest recurring or bid events of municipality-wide importance. Central to civic life and requiring strong municipal coordination across multiple services.	25,000 – 100,000+	Municipality-wide significance	Large public realm use or multi-site activity across HRM	Significant — transit, policing, closures, cross-divisional planning	High cultural and tourism value; sustained regional/national visibility	Major street festival; multi-site national sport championship
TIER 2	Medium-to-large events that anchor their communities and attract wider audiences. Operational demands are more contained but still require municipal coordination.	5,000 – 50,000+	Municipality-wide recognition (though not defining)	Single or limited sites, urban or rural	Moderate — permits, site planning, some traffic or safety support	Regional tourism and cultural draw; moderate visibility	Outdoor concert series; regional food festival
TIER 3	Neighbourhood or community-scale events contributing to Halifax's cultural vibrancy and local identity. Require limited but meaningful municipal support for safe and successful delivery.	500 – 10,000	Neighbourhood or community-based	Localized, single-site	Low — basic permitting, limited service needs	Builds community identity and inclusion; limited tourism impact	Charity walk; art festival in a park
TIER 4	Hyper-local, grassroots gatherings forming the foundation of community life. Typically volunteer-driven and requiring little or no municipal coordination.	Up to 2,000	Hyper-local; single neighbourhood or facility	Single site; limited infrastructure	Minimal to none	Fosters civic pride and local connection	Outdoor movie night

Appendix B – Glossary

Administrative Order (AO): A formal HRM policy instrument that establishes governance, funding, and program structures.

Administrative Order 2014-020-GOV: The Marketing Levy Special Event Reserve (MLSER) Grants Administrative Order, which provides the legal authority for allocating municipal resources to major events under this Framework.

Council / Regional Council: The elected governing body of HRM and the final decision-making authority for all policies, funding, and commitments under this Framework.

Delegated Authority: Approval power granted to municipal staff within Council-approved budgets and criteria, allowing timely funding or operational decisions.

Discover Halifax (DH): The destination development and marketing organization for Halifax, and HRM's strategic delivery partner for tourism and event development, operating under a municipal service agreement. Discover Halifax leads the Event Attraction & Portfolio Strategy and provides analysis, reporting, and coordination across the event ecosystem.

Event Attraction & Portfolio Strategy: A planning tool that sets event priorities and guides proactive attraction and investment for Halifax.

Event Category: A descriptive grouping of events (e.g., Mega, Major, Tier 1–4) that provides a shared understanding of scale, scope, and coordination needs.

Event Designation: A label recognizing events of unique cultural, historical, or geographic significance.

Event Ecosystem: The network of public, private, and community partners involved in the attraction, planning, delivery, and legacy of events in the Halifax region.

Event Organizer / Rights Holder / Producer: The entity responsible for planning and delivering an event, accountable for meeting commitments made in exchange for public funding or support.

Events Industry Advisory Group (EIAG): A collaborative advisory forum coordinated through Discover Halifax that provides industry insight, identifies barriers to growth, and informs event policy and program development.

Framework: The Major Event & Growth Policy Framework, the guiding policy document that defines values, scope, expectations, and governance for event investment and development in Halifax.

Halifax Regional Event Strategy (HRES): The regional strategy for event attraction, development, and growth. It acts as a catalyst for the creation of supporting tools and directives under this Framework.

Impact Framework: The shared system for evaluating supported events through common measures and reporting standards.

Major Event: A nationally or internationally recognized event that positions Halifax as a prominent host city and generates substantial visibility, tourism, and economic impact.

Marketing Levy Special Event Reserve (MLSER): A dedicated municipal reserve funded through the tourism marketing levy. It provides the financial basis for HRM's investment in major events that align with community, tourism, and economic development goals.

Proactive Investment: A strategic, opportunity-driven approach where HRM and its partners identify and develop event opportunities, rather than relying on open applications or reactive intake.

Program Directive: A Council-approved policy instrument under the Framework that defines the purpose, eligibility, and structure of specific funding or support programs.

Province of Nova Scotia: HRM's senior-government partner in funding and policy for tourism, culture, and economic development initiatives, primarily through Communities, Culture, Tourism, and Heritage, and Events Nova Scotia.

Special Events Advisory Committee (SEAC): A Council-appointed advisory committee that reviews event funding, program directives, and related policy instruments to ensure public accountability and alignment with the Framework's guiding values.

Special Events Task Force (SETF): HRM's coordinating mechanism for integrating event safety, risk management, and operational review across departments and agencies.

Values-Based Approach: A decision-making framework emphasizing principles, transparency, and accountability rather than prescriptive regulation.