

# 11 Edinburgh, a Festival City

Edinburgh has long been recognized as a global model for “festival cities”, and is often cited as a leader in the planning and evaluation of events. In 2010 Edinburgh won the World Festival and Event City award from the International Festival and Event Association (IFEA) and was declared the most outstanding global entry.

According to Visit Scotland’s 2015 visitor survey (cited in BOP Consulting 2018, p. 8), “Edinburgh’s Festivals each year deliver over 3,000 events, reaching audiences of more than 4.5 million and creating the equivalent of approximately 6,000 full time jobs. 32% of the 14 million+ annual visitors to Scotland are motivated by the nation’s cultural and heritage offer, in which the Festivals play a defining role.”

The city is frequently cited in the events literature, and its generous posting of material online is a boon to scholars and practitioners alike. The companion book in this series, *Event Impact Assessment* (Getz, 2019), presents highlights from a succession of impact studies that Festivals Edinburgh has placed online, while in this book we examine portfolio management through a review of published documents (all available online) and input from Festivals Edinburgh.

Permanent, formal stakeholder collaboration, and strategic planning supported by research is in large part what distinguishes Edinburgh’s event portfolio. The Festivals Forum (established in 2007 following the first *Thundering Hooves* report) facilitates stakeholder collaboration, particularly by bringing major funders to the table with events and venues. Festivals Edinburgh is a formal, staffed association of the eleven major, permanent festivals that contribute most to the city’s image and to event-tourism impacts. Leadership is shared, not concentrated in one organization. As well, the city and Scottish Government work closely together, facilitated by the explicit portfolio strategy followed by EventScotland.

Innovation in programming the festivals is matched by leadership in environmental sustainability and social responsibility. Engagement with residents is considered to be a high priority, and this includes demonstrating benefits through regular and comprehensive impact studies that cover cultural, social, economic and environmental impacts. Investment in venues and infrastructure has also been a priority for the city.

The success of Edinburgh illustrates several important points for event portfolio creation, management, and strategy:

- ◆ Edinburgh and Scotland demonstrate that portfolio management is being implemented at three levels: nation, city, and festival programming; the Edinburgh arrangements have been referred to as a ‘festival ecosystem’.
- ◆ The 11 major Edinburgh festivals have a formal organization and can be considered a managed portfolio.
- ◆ Integration of vision, policy, strategy and funding between festivals, city and national agencies works well in Scotland; there are common goals and integrated actions.
- ◆ Collaboration of key stakeholders is both formal and informal; networking procedures are well established.
- ◆ Strategic planning and research have facilitated innovation and competitiveness.
- ◆ Synergies are fostered with regard to achieving desired benefits in the fields of branding, communications, financing, venues and the engagement of residents.

## Festivals Edinburgh

The formal organization Festivals Edinburgh can be considered the focal organization from a portfolio perspective. Few cities have this level of institutionalized collaboration among festivals or events, complete with full-time and part-time staff. It is noteworthy that the initiative to form Festivals Edinburgh was taken by the festivals themselves rather than the city. Figure 11.1 describes this organisation’s mission, objectives, priorities, governance and ‘insight’.



**Figure 11.1:** Festivals Edinburgh. Source: edinburghfestivalcity.com.



**Edinburgh International Children’s Festival**

Imagine Festival School  
(Credit: Kat Gollock)



**Edinburgh International Book Festival**

Book Festival Village  
(Credit: The Festival)



**Edinburgh Film Festival**

Opening Gala  
(Credit: The Festival)



**Edinburgh’s Hogmany**

Torchlight Procession  
(Credit: David Cheskin)



**Scottish Storytelling Festival**

Open Heart  
(Credit: Ludovic Farine)



**Edinburgh International Festival**

Virgin Money Fireworks  
Concert (Credit: Dave Stewart)



**The Royal Edinburgh Military Tattoo**

Tattoo Fireworks Finale  
(Credit: The Tattoo)



**Edinburgh International Science Festival**

GastroFest  
(Credit: The Festival)



**Edinburgh Art Festival**

Art Late at Talbot Rice  
Gallery (Credit: The  
Festival)



**Edinburgh Festival Fringe**

Street Performance  
(Credit: Dave Monteith-  
Hodge)



**Edinburgh Jazz and Blues Festival**

Mr Sipp  
(Credit: The Festival)

**Figure 11.2:** The eleven members of Festivals Edinburgh (as of 2019).