



**The Dickson Street Festival  
Case Study:  
Training Strategies for  
Small-Town Festival Success**

**By Stephanie Bilderback, Ph.D.**

---

Center for Applied  
Business Research



**Center for Applied  
Business Research**

**Dr. Stephanie Bilderback** is an Instructor of Management at Austin Peay State University, where she is known for bringing energy, clarity, and real-world relevance into the classroom. Her teaching emphasizes practical decision-making, ethical leadership, teamwork, and professional readiness - helping students translate management theory into skills they can immediately apply in the workplace. Students value her approachable style and her ability to connect complex concepts to everyday organizational challenges, from motivating teams to navigating conflict and change.

In addition to her teaching excellence, Bilderback is an accomplished scholar and author of several peer-reviewed journal articles. Her research explores contemporary issues in management and contributes to the broader dialogue on effective leadership, organizational behavior, and applied business practice. By integrating her scholarly work with her teaching, she models the powerful connection between research and practice - proving that good management is both an art and a science.

## About the Author

## Table of Contents

Executive Summary .....	p. 1
Context and Background .....	p. 2
Case Study Approach .....	p. 3
Key Factors for Small Town Festival Success .....	p. 5
Bridging Case Insights .....	p. 7
Technology-Driven Solutions .....	p. 9
Lessons Learned from the Dickson Case .....	p. 11
References .....	p. 14
Tables and Figures .....	p. 17

## Executive Summary

This white paper examines the rise and eventual discontinuation of the Dickson Street Festival (2021–2023) in Dickson, a small city in Middle Tennessee located roughly 35 miles southwest of Clarksville. The case highlights how the festival initially generated economic vitality, cultural visibility, and civic pride before ultimately collapsing due to declining sponsorships, limited municipal support, and the disbandment of its organizing body. Compared to Clarksville’s larger capacity for event support, Dickson faced constraints typical of small towns, including a smaller tax base, a heavier reliance on volunteers, and vulnerability to leadership turnover. Importantly, Dickson and Clarksville are closely linked through educational and workforce pipelines, with a significant share of Austin Peay State University’s students originating from Dickson County. In Fall 2024 alone, 474 APSU students came from Dickson County, representing about 4.5% of the student body (Austin Peay State University, 2024). This connection emphasizes the broader role of APSU in shaping community capacity and leadership development across Middle Tennessee, making lessons from the Dickson case directly relevant to both cities. The analysis reveals that sustainable community festivals depend on leadership continuity, structured stakeholder training, and effective use of digital tools, translating observed gaps in Dickson into practical strategies that can inform small-town event planning and capacity building across the region.

*The Dickson Street Festival, held annually in Downtown Dickson, Tennessee, from 2021 to 2023, emerged as a cornerstone event that showcased this small town's cultural vibrancy, community spirit, and economic potential.*

## Introduction

The Dickson Street Festival, held annually in Downtown Dickson, Tennessee, from 2021 to 2023, emerged as a cornerstone event that showcased this small town's cultural vibrancy, community spirit, and economic potential. Organized by the Downtown Dickson Association (DDA), the festival featured a diverse lineup of live music, local artisans, food

vendors, and family-friendly activities, drawing thousands of attendees each year (Dickson Herald Staff, 2021; Lurie, 2022). The festival was held annually in late June, typically from noon to 10 p.m. during the peak of Tennessee’s hot and humid summer season. With temperatures often reaching the high 80s and low 90s (°F), the festival’s planning incorporated cooling stations, shaded areas, and hydration resources to support attendee comfort and safety. The event celebrated the ongoing revitalization of Downtown Dickson, which has benefited from \$5 million in state-funded enhancements aimed at preserving the town’s historic charm while promoting economic growth (Dickson Herald Staff, 2021). The festival became a symbol of pride and progress for the community by providing a platform for local businesses and artists to thrive. Key sponsors, including TriStar Bank in 2021 and local businesses such as Zander’s Woodfired Pizza, Daltile, and Blankenship CPA Group in 2022, contributed to the event’s success by fostering essential partnerships with local stakeholders.

While the Dickson Street Festival achieved notable successes, it faced significant challenges, eventually leading to its cancellation in 2024. Issues such as declining sponsorships, rising operational costs, and organizational restructuring within the DDA hindered the festival’s ability to maintain its momentum and financial sustainability (Lurie, 2024). These challenges reflect broader difficulties that many small-town festivals encounter, highlighting the delicate balance required to sustain community-driven events in resource-constrained environments. Scholars have repeatedly noted that small-town festivals struggle with precisely these resource gaps, citing volunteer fatigue, narrow sponsorship pools, and fragile leadership structures as endemic risks (Getz & Page, 2016; Mair & Whitford, 2023).

Festivals play a vital role in small-town economies by driving tourism, increasing local business revenue, and fostering civic pride and engagement. The Dickson Street Festival exemplified both functions, catalyzing economic development and serving as a tool for strengthening social capital in the aftermath of the COVID-19 pandemic (Gadd, 2021). Beyond its financial contributions, the festival demonstrated how such events can unite communities, particularly in the aftermath of disruptions like the COVID-19 pandemic, which had

previously limited public gatherings (Lurie, 2022). As communities sought to rebuild social ties and reinvigorate local economies, the festival provided a much-needed outlet for collective celebration and cultural expression.

This case study examines the development, impact, and eventual collapse of the Dickson Street Festival to identify key factors influencing sustainability in a small-town festival. The guiding research objectives are: (1) to explore how leadership, community engagement, and funding contributed to the festival's success; (2) to examine the challenges that led to its cancellation; and (3) to translate these lessons into practical training strategies for small-town festival organizers. By analyzing the festival's history, logistical challenges, and overall community impact, this study provides actionable strategies for sustaining similar events in small-town settings. This paper is divided into three parts: first, the local context and growth of the Dickson Street Festival are reviewed; second, its operational challenges are examined; and third, the paper translates these findings into training strategies that are directly informed by the Dickson case. The lessons learned from the Dickson case can inform future festival planning efforts by emphasizing the importance of leadership continuity, diverse funding models, and strong community partnerships in creating events that celebrate local identity and contribute to long-term economic vitality. This case study examines how the dual aims of economic revitalization and social cohesion influenced the planning and outcomes of a rapidly growing downtown street festival in Dickson, Tennessee.

## Context and Background

The first step is to understand the local context and conditions that gave rise to the Dickson Street Festival and to explain how it initially achieved success. Dickson, Tennessee, is a small city located in Dickson County within the Nashville metropolitan area. With a population of 16,058 according to the 2020 U.S. Census, Dickson is known for its close-knit community and the historic charm of its downtown district. Initially established as a railroad stop in the 19th century, Dickson has evolved into a thriving hub for local businesses, families, and cultural events. Over the past decade, revitalization efforts have transformed the downtown area, driven by

approximately \$5 million in state enhancement grants aimed at preserving its historic architecture and boosting economic activity (Dickson Herald Staff, 2021). Such place-based revitalization aligns with findings from small-scale rural festival studies, which link 'main-street' renewal directly to cultural-event programming and emphasize context-sensitive models for rural event management (Capriello & Rotherham, 2013; Knox & Mayer, 2013; Wood, 2017). These efforts have reinvigorated community pride and reinforced the importance of small-town festivals as essential contributors to the local economy and social fabric.

Festivals play a pivotal role in towns like Dickson by driving tourism, increasing foot traffic for local businesses, and creating opportunities for community engagement (Getz, 2010; Quinn, 2019; Bazzanella et al., 2023). Events like the Dickson Street Festival provide a platform for local vendors, artisans, and performers to showcase their work and foster cultural expression that strengthens place attachment and civic pride (Claridge, 2018).. Dickson's population consists mainly of working families whose participation in community events highlights the importance of maintaining a vibrant and active local culture. Festivals are more than just recreational activities; they are economic catalysts that strengthen small-town economies by increasing visibility for local businesses and encouraging visitors to explore the downtown district.

The Downtown Dickson Association (DDA) was a key driver behind the organization and success of the Dickson Street Festival from 2021 to 2023. Comprising local business owners, civic leaders, and community members, the DDA aimed to promote the progress of downtown revitalization by hosting events that showcased local talent and entrepreneurship (Gadd, 2021). The association's efforts were bolstered by partnerships with professional event planners, such as Wayfaring Event Services, which helped streamline logistics and improve festival operations. Community support also played a crucial role in the festival's early success, as evidenced by high first-year attendance (approximately 7,000 attendees), widespread volunteer participation, and social media engagement featuring hundreds of residents wearing branded merchandise and promoting the event (Dickson Herald Staff, 2021; Gadd, 2021). Financial stability during these years was further strengthened by

sponsorships from local businesses, including TriStar Bank in 2021 and Zander's Woodfired Pizza, Daltile, and Blankenship CPA Group in 2022. These partnerships allowed the festival to expand its offerings and enhance the overall experience for attendees.

However, despite its initial success, the Dickson Street Festival faced significant financial and organizational challenges, ultimately leading to its cancellation in 2024. Rising operational costs, declining sponsorships, and restructuring within the DDA created obstacles that the organization was unable to overcome (Lurie, 2024). The festival's financial constraints highlight the delicate balance small-town festivals must maintain to remain sustainable. Overreliance on a limited number of sponsors or funding sources can create vulnerabilities, especially in towns with finite resources. The Dickson case resonates with broader concerns about the fragility of rural event tourism, where festivals frequently face resource shortages, seasonal pressures, and uneven community support (Skoultos & Tsartas, 2009).

The impact of the Dickson Street Festival on the local economy and social cohesion was substantial. The event attracted thousands of attendees yearly, generating increased revenue for local vendors, food trucks, and artisans. These economic benefits extended beyond the festival, as visitors often patronized downtown businesses, contributing to the area's economic revitalization. Socially, the festival provided a much needed gathering space for residents to connect, celebrate, and strengthen community ties. Events like the Dickson Street Festival symbolize pride for towns like Dickson, reinforcing the importance of cultural preservation while promoting economic development. By highlighting the town's unique identity and progress, the festival demonstrated Dickson's potential to thrive as a small-town destination for residents and visitors (Dickson Herald Staff, 2021; Gadd, 2021).

The Dickson Street Festival was a free, family-oriented event held annually in downtown Dickson, Tennessee, from 2021 to 2023. Each festival took place on a Saturday in late June, from noon to 10:00 p.m., and occupied several blocks of Main Street and Church Street in the city's historic downtown core. The event required road closures, public access to electricity and sanitation, and cooperation with city

services for the setup of infrastructure. It featured live music from over 15 local and regional performers across multiple stages, as well as over 100 artisan and food vendors. Additionally, a Kids Zone with inflatables and face painting was available, along with a fireworks finale in 2021 and 2022. In 2022 and 2023, beer gardens and a youth entrepreneur vendor area were added. The Downtown Dickson Association coordinated the festival with support from Wayfaring Event Services in its inaugural year. Annually, 40 to 60 volunteers assisted in managing vendor logistics, crowd flow, and general event operations. Attendance was estimated at approximately 7,000 in 2021 and grew to nearly 10,000 by 2022 before declining in 2023.

## Case Study Approach

This case study employs a qualitative, document-based approach, synthesizing local news coverage, city government documents, interviews with event organizers, promotional materials, and community commentary to reconstruct the trajectory of the Dickson Street Festival. This research employs a document-based, qualitative case study, drawing on publicly available data sources, including local newspapers, social media archives, city records, promotional flyers, and interviews with organizers featured in media coverage. While no original fieldwork was conducted, this triangulation of secondary sources aligns with accepted methods for exploratory festival case research (Getz et al., 2006; Yin, 2017). These sources were coded deductively according to themes derived from prior literature on leadership, funding, community engagement, and sustainability. To strengthen trustworthiness, municipal minutes, local media coverage, and event documentation were triangulated, and insights were organized deductively around four literature-informed themes.

*This case reinforces broader findings that community festivals serve as vehicles for generating social capital, promoting economic revitalization, and fostering civic identity when supported by consistent leadership and training.*

## Challenges Faced

We can analyze the festival's challenges in its final years, focusing on funding, participation, and leadership breakdowns. Although no formal impact evaluation was conducted, observable indicators suggest that the community and economic benefits were evident during the festival's peak. These include estimated attendance growth from 7,000 in 2021 to nearly 10,000 in 2022, increased vendor applications, and anecdotal reports of elevated foot traffic and same-day sales from downtown businesses (Gadd, 2021; Lurie, 2022). Social media engagement also spiked, with promotional posts receiving hundreds of interactions in the lead-up to the events. These proxies offer a preliminary sense of the festival's value to the local economy and public life.

The Dickson Street Festival encountered many significant challenges, ultimately leading to its discontinuation in 2024. These issues included declining participation, financial constraints, and organizational instability, hindering the festival's long-term sustainability. One of the most pressing concerns was the steady decline in vendor and attendee engagement. The inaugural festival in 2021 and its subsequent expansion in 2022 were well-received, drawing approximately 7,000 and 10,000 attendees, respectively. These early successes suggested that the event could become a hallmark of the community's cultural and economic revitalization (Gadd, 2021). However, by 2023, organizers struggled to maintain this momentum. Vendors began disengaging from the event, citing logistical concerns and reduced profitability, which diminished the festival's overall appeal and reputation. According to Lurie (2024), many vendors expressed dissatisfaction with operational issues, including booth placement and marketing efforts, which led some to withdraw their participation altogether. This disengagement created a ripple effect, reducing the variety of offerings for attendees and ultimately impacting the festival's draw.

Efforts to secure sponsorships for the 2023 festival also fell short compared to previous years. While sponsors such as TriStar Bank and local businesses had provided financial support in the festival's early years, economic uncertainty and a decline in event visibility made it difficult to attract

new sponsors. The lack of sufficient sponsorships impacted the festival's ability to offer high-quality features and entertainment, such as live music performances and family-friendly activities, which had previously been key to its success. As a result, the festival's scale and quality diminished, making it less appealing to vendors and attendees (Lurie, 2024).

Financial and logistical constraints further compounded these challenges. Hosting the Dickson Street Festival required approximately \$40,000 annually, a substantial cost for a small-town event (Lurie, 2024). While the Downtown Dickson Association (DDA) initially hired professional event planners, such as Wayfaring Event Services, to support operations in 2021, this external assistance was unavailable in later years due to budget limitations. Without the expertise of professional planners, festival organizers faced increased pressure to manage the event's logistics, from vendor coordination to marketing and crowd control. Rising event management costs and a lack of stable funding sources placed a significant financial burden on the DDA, which struggled to cover essential expenses, including security, equipment rentals, and promotional materials (Lurie, 2024).

The lack of municipal support further strained the festival's viability. In previous years, city officials had provided logistical assistance, such as road closures and law enforcement coordination, to ensure the festival's success. However, the city government's decision to withhold support for the 2023 festival had a significant impact on its operations. Planned features, including fireworks displays and expanded vendor zones, had to be scaled back or eliminated due to insufficient resources and workforce. The absence of municipal backing weakened the festival's capacity to attract residents and visitors from surrounding areas. It signaled a shift in local priorities, leaving the DDA to shoulder the full responsibility of organizing the event (Lurie, 2024).

The most critical challenge, however, was the disbandment of the Downtown Dickson Association in 2024. As the primary organizing body for the Dickson Street Festival, the DDA played an essential role in coordinating volunteers, securing sponsorships, and fostering partnerships with local businesses and community members. Its restructuring

and eventual dissolution created a leadership void that made it impossible to continue the festival. While the festival had strengthened community identity and social ties, its cancellation was most deeply felt economically, through lost vendor income, a decline in tourism, and diminished foot traffic for downtown businesses. The disbandment of the DDA marked the end of the Dickson Street Festival and eliminated a key driver of downtown revitalization efforts. The festival had become a symbol of community pride and a platform for showcasing Dickson's cultural and economic potential. Its cancellation had a noticeable impact on the local economy by reducing opportunities for vendors, performers, and businesses to engage with residents and visitors (Lurie, 2024).

The challenges faced by the Dickson Street Festival highlight the complex interplay of financial stability, organizational leadership, and community support required to sustain small-town events. Without consistent funding, reliable sponsorships, and strong leadership structures, even the most promising festivals are vulnerable to decline. The festival's closure serves as a cautionary tale for other small towns aiming to host similar events, emphasizing the need for long-term planning, diversified revenue streams, and continuous community engagement to ensure sustainability. These challenges marked the end of the Dickson Street Festival and reflect structural vulnerabilities common in small-town events. The following section translates these breakdowns into a framework of success factors, directly informed by the lessons learned from Dickson's trajectory.

## **Key Factors for Small-Town Festival Success**

### **Community Engagement**

Effective community engagement is the cornerstone of successful small-town festivals. Mobilizing resident participation and support is essential for building a sense of ownership and pride in the event. Festivals like the Dickson Street Festival demonstrated the importance of connecting with residents by offering family-friendly activities and showcasing local artisans, musicians, and businesses. Activities that reflect a community's unique culture

can foster deeper emotional connections and ensure higher attendance. Building partnerships with local organizations and stakeholders is another critical strategy. Collaborations with civic groups, schools, and local nonprofits can help diversify offerings and increase participation. For example, including local high school dance teams or regional musicians, as seen in Dickson, allows stakeholders to feel invested in the event. Engaging local government can also provide logistical and financial support, such as access to public spaces and funding for infrastructure needs. This type of engagement aligns with social capital theory, particularly as described by Claridge (2018) as bonding social capital, which involves strong internal ties that promote trust, shared identity, and collective action (McCarthy & Rosario, 2025). Festivals often foster this kind of capital, strengthening civic cohesion in rural settings (Putnam, 2000; Mair & Duffy, 2018). Festivals that activate these bonds help cultivate community resilience, particularly in small towns where social infrastructure is often more influential than formal institutions. Community involvement in festival planning and execution enhances social cohesion and leverages local knowledge, core components of social capital that rural events are uniquely positioned to develop (Reid, 2003).

### **Marketing and Outreach**

Resourcefulness is essential for marketing in small towns, where budgets are often constrained. The Dickson Street Festival relied heavily on creative, low-cost strategies to generate buzz and engage local and regional audiences. The Downtown Dickson Association (DDA) utilized platforms like Facebook and Instagram to highlight festival features, including music lineups, vendor lists, and family-friendly activities. Professionally designed graphics, like those featured below in Figure 1, were created by a local graphic designer and used extensively on social media to promote the festival. Social media platforms now play a central role in event management, offering outreach, engagement, and feedback tools that are especially valuable for small-town festivals with limited budgets (Mohammed et al., 2023).

### Dickson Street Festival Advertisement Example 1



While these designs added a polished and professional touch, they also required financial investment, which can be a consideration for small-town events with limited budgets.

In addition to digital marketing, the DDA shared photos of local business owners and community members wearing branded festival T-shirts on their social media pages, featured below in Figure 2. These images served as a visual representation of community pride and involvement. Highlighting familiar faces from the local community created a relatable and welcoming atmosphere that encouraged residents to feel personally connected to the event. The T-shirts, featuring bold designs and the festival's logo, reinforced the event's branding by creating a unified, easily recognizable visual identity.

The strategy of showcasing local participants in branded attire elevated the marketing efforts by turning them into a symbol of collaboration and support within the community. For local businesses, being featured in these posts provided additional visibility and demonstrated their investment in the festival's success. Seeing friends and neighbors represented, residents were more likely to engage with the event and share these posts, amplifying the festival's reach through organic promotion. Using this approach, the DDA successfully combined marketing with community engagement, strengthening connections between local businesses, residents, and the festival. These efforts ensured that the event resonated deeply with the community, building anticipation and excitement.

### Dickson Street Festival Advertisement Example 2



Word-of-mouth marketing further amplified the festival's reach, leveraging the close-knit nature of small-town communities. Encouraging residents to share their experiences and enthusiasm for the event helped draw attendees from neighboring areas. Establishing consistent branding, as seen in the festival's use of themed graphics and T-shirts, contributed to a sense of tradition and made the event more recognizable year after year. Although volunteers led these marketing efforts, the combination of professional design elements and community-driven content exemplified how small towns can achieve high-impact promotion with limited resources. These outreach strategies tap into pre-existing social networks within the community. Harb et al. (2019) found that social media significantly enhances event visibility and attendee engagement, making it a cost-effective marketing tool for community-based festivals. As Getz et al. (2006) argued, informal communication channels among residents can play a decisive role in mobilizing festival participation and reinforcing a shared identity around local events.

### Vendor Relations

Maintaining strong relationships with vendors is crucial for the sustainability of any festival. Vendors are more likely to participate if they feel the event is well-organized and profitable. Open communication about expectations, logistics, and the event's audience can build trust and strengthen collaboration. Reid (2011) emphasized that stakeholder-centered approaches, particularly those that prioritize ongoing vendor relationships, are essential to rural event sustainability. Dickson's early success in attracting over 100 vendors for its inaugural festival can be attributed to clear communication and robust

marketing efforts. Addressing vendor concerns, such as booth fees or foot traffic, can increase retention. Offering incentives, such as discounted fees for returning vendors or highlighting successful stories in promotional materials, can foster long-term partnerships. Festivals that prioritize vendor needs are more likely to cultivate a diverse and loyal vendor base. Supporting vendor success contributes to the economic dimension of the triple bottom line framework, which emphasizes long-term stakeholder value, including for small businesses and artisans (Elkington & Rowlands, 1999). Maintaining vendor trust strengthens the economic resilience of the event and reinforces the festival's value proposition to the community.

### **Sustainability and Funding**

A sustainable funding model is critical for the longevity of small-town festivals. The Dickson Street Festival's reliance on sponsorships from local businesses, such as TriStar Bank and Zander's Woodfired Pizza, highlights the importance of cultivating relationships with regional companies. However, as seen in 2023, the festival struggled when sponsorships declined. Diversifying funding sources can reduce reliance on any single revenue stream. Small towns can explore grant opportunities from state or national organizations that support arts, culture, or economic development. Small towns can explore grant opportunities from state or national organizations that support arts, culture, or economic development, ideally as part of a more integrated rural tourism strategy that positions festivals as anchors for broader community development (Panyik et al., 2011). Crowdfunding campaigns and community fundraising efforts can also provide supplemental resources while building grassroots support for the event. Offering tiered sponsorship packages with tangible benefits, such as advertising opportunities or prominent logo placement, can attract a diverse range of sponsors. Sustainable festivals in small towns should also consider the triple bottom line, balancing economic viability, social equity, and environmental responsibility (Knox & Mayer, 2013). For example, organizers can enhance social impact by ensuring inclusive access, and environmental goals can be addressed through initiatives such as waste management and local sourcing. This approach aligns

with long-term community development goals and strengthens stakeholder trust.

Investing in training for festival organizers can enhance the sustainability of events. Skills in grant writing, budget management, and vendor relations can ensure a more professional and financially sound operation. Encouraging collaboration with experienced event planners, as Dickson did in 2021, can also improve outcomes by bringing expertise to the planning process.

### **Bridging Case Insights and Training Strategies for Festival Sustainability**

While the prior section outlined the conditions for success, many were only partially realized in the Dickson case. This final section bridges the gap between observed outcomes and practical intervention by introducing training-based solutions rooted in Dickson's shortfalls. The aim is to provide small-town organizers with replicable strategies that address the operational, financial, and leadership challenges outlined earlier.

The final section bridges the case findings with practical training strategies that can help prevent similar outcomes in other small-town events. The preceding sections explored the context, growth, and ultimate collapse of the Dickson Street Festival, highlighting both operational strengths and organizational breakdowns. To transition from narrative to application, this section draws directly on lessons observed in the Dickson case to outline targeted training strategies that enhance the long-term sustainability of small-town festivals. Each strategy, focused on leadership, stakeholder preparedness, conflict management, and digital integration, reflects issues that were either successfully managed or noticeably absent during the festival's brief lifespan. The following recommendations offer actionable guidance for similar community-led events by bridging case-specific insights with existing literature.

Festivals in small-town settings often depend heavily on limited resources and volunteers, making effective training strategies vital for sustained success. Frost and Laing (2018) emphasized the importance of structured approaches to ensure these events remain impactful and sustainable. Building on this

foundation, Chang (2019) suggested that focusing on leadership development, stakeholder training, and the use of technology are critical components for success. A structured framework for training equips key stakeholders, such as committee members, volunteers, and vendors, to navigate the multifaceted challenges of event planning and execution.

### **Leadership and Organizational Training**

Following the disbandment of the Downtown Dickson Association, the sudden cancellation of the Dickson Street Festival in 2024 revealed a clear leadership gap that training might have helped prevent. As evidenced by the Dickson Street Festival's early success under the DDA's active leadership and its eventual collapse following the DDA's disbandment, strong leadership is the backbone of any successful festival. Anderson (2017) emphasized that leadership development programs empower organizers to manage diverse teams, make informed decisions, and address emerging challenges effectively. Such programs should include foundational modules on project management, financial oversight, delegation, and risk assessment, as suggested by Alan et al. (2008). These elements are crucial in equipping festival leaders to handle the multifaceted responsibilities of event organization. In the case of Dickson, leadership gaps became especially apparent after the disbandment of the Downtown Dickson Association, when the lack of succession planning and role clarity directly contributed to the cancellation of the festival.

Leadership workshops tailored for small-town organizers can provide targeted insights into resource allocation and contingency planning, which are often more complex in communities with limited financial and human resources. Municipalities and event organizers can enhance their capacity by collaborating with local education providers, such as community colleges or leadership-focused consulting firms, to deliver workshops and training sessions. These partnerships bring expertise and foster community involvement by engaging local institutions. Lengnick-Hall et al. (2011) emphasized that leadership training should extend beyond theoretical knowledge, incorporating practical exercises and case studies to enhance its effectiveness. For instance, role-playing exercises that simulate common festival challenges,

such as vendor conflicts or unexpected weather disruptions, can prepare leaders for real-world scenarios.

Organizational training must also address long-term sustainability. Lengnick-Hall et al. (2011) highlighted the importance of setting clear goals, creating realistic timelines, and devising contingency plans to ensure impactful and adaptable events. Such structured approaches foster accountability and enhance committee cohesion, ensuring festival teams operate as unified entities. Moreover, Davis and Lundstrom (2011) suggested that a detailed operations manual, including documented workflows and communication protocols, can mitigate disruptions caused by leadership transitions or volunteer turnover. Training can distinguish between success and logistical failure in small towns, where resources are often constrained. Leadership training should prioritize adaptability, given the unpredictable nature of festival planning. Workshops on crisis management, for example, can equip leaders to handle emergencies ranging from weather disruptions to vendor cancellations. Building a leadership pipeline through mentorship programs within organizing committees can also ensure institutional knowledge is passed down, sustaining the festival's momentum over time.

### **Structured Training Programs for Stakeholders**

In 2023, vendors and volunteers became disengaged due to unclear expectations and communication breakdowns, underscoring the need for structured stakeholder training. The roles of community leaders, volunteers, and vendors are pivotal to the success of small-town festivals. Lopes (2024) emphasized that well-structured training programs can enhance the contributions of these groups while streamlining event operations. Volunteers, for instance, play a vital role in festival logistics, from guiding attendees to managing safety protocols. Training for volunteers should prioritize customer service, safety awareness, and task-specific responsibilities to ensure seamless event delivery. Olotu (2023) suggested that role-playing scenarios and hands-on workshops effectively build confidence and competence among volunteers. Vendors are another cornerstone of successful festivals, as they contribute to the event's appeal and financial

sustainability. Dickson's vendors, for example, began disengaging in the final year due to poor communication and unclear expectations, issues that targeted stakeholder training could have addressed. Coy (2019) suggested that vendors can benefit from workshops on booth setup, customer engagement, and marketing strategies, which help maximize profitability and satisfaction. Practical training in product display, crowd interaction, and transaction management can significantly improve vendor performance and attendee experience. Furthermore, establishing clear guidelines and expectations during the training process can reduce misunderstandings and ensure a smooth operation on the event day.

Community leaders require specialized training in stakeholder collaboration, grant writing, and conflict management. Selman (2004) emphasized that these skills are critical for broader festival initiatives, such as securing funding or navigating political landscapes. Training programs for community leaders should focus on developing negotiation skills, strategic planning, and relationship-building techniques. Moreover, leadership training for this group should incorporate methods for aligning diverse stakeholder interests to create a unified vision for the festival. Partnerships with local chambers of commerce, educational institutions, and state resources can significantly enhance the delivery of these training programs. Xing et al. (2018) highlighted the importance of collaboration between municipalities and educational institutions in fostering a culture of continuous learning. For example, high schools offering work-based learning programs and internships through colleges or technical programs can address staffing needs while providing valuable hands-on experience for students (Bilderback, 2024). Such initiatives prepare the next generation of leaders and strengthen the community's investment in the festival's success.

### **Technology-Driven Solutions**

While Dickson utilized social media effectively, it lacked digital tools for vendor management, volunteer coordination, and data tracking, which limited its ability to scale and adapt. Integrating technology into festival operations offers transformative opportunities for optimizing planning and execution. Halim et al. (2023) emphasized that

training stakeholders to use event management software, online ticketing platforms, and volunteer coordination tools can streamline logistics while minimizing administrative burdens. As Thirusanku and Ai (2024) emphasized, integrating emerging technologies into event planning streamlines operations, enhances scalability, communication, and attendee engagement, especially in resource-constrained contexts. Event management software, for instance, can centralize planning processes, ensuring that tasks such as vendor assignments, schedule coordination, and ticket sales are handled efficiently and effectively. While the Dickson Street Festival effectively used social media for marketing, there is no evidence of integrated digital tools for volunteer scheduling, vendor management, or data collection, representing a missed opportunity to professionalize planning and capture performance metrics. Kristiansen et al. (2021) highlighted that training organizers can leverage analytics tools within these platforms to assess performance metrics and identify areas for improvement. Technology also plays a significant role in enhancing attendee experiences. Ahmed et al. (2014) highlighted the benefits of mobile apps for real-time updates on activities, schedules, and vendor information. Training organizers to utilize these apps effectively ensures that attendees remain informed and engaged throughout the event. Additionally, social media platforms like Instagram and Facebook offer powerful marketing tools for festivals with limited budgets. Rothschild (2011) suggested that training in social media management allows organizers to craft targeted campaigns that amplify event visibility.

Small-town organizers should consider partnerships with local technology programs or businesses to access affordable training solutions. Knox and Mayer (2013) suggested that collaborations with regional education facilities or software companies can provide training and discounted access to necessary technologies. Training sessions focusing on digital tools, such as graphic design software, email marketing platforms, and customer relationship management systems, can further enhance the professionalism and reach of festival communications. Investing in technology also prepares festivals to adapt to unexpected challenges. For example, weather-related cancellations or schedule changes can be communicated instantly

through event apps or automated messaging systems. This adaptability, combined with the ability to analyze attendee feedback and participation data, positions festivals to grow and evolve. Small-town organizers can create efficient and scalable, attendee-focused events by integrating technology into their training programs.

### **Conflict Resolution and Effective Communication**

The unresolved vendor complaints in 2023, combined with the absence of proactive communication, illustrate how interpersonal and logistical conflicts contributed to the festival's decline. Collaboration among multiple stakeholders is integral to festivals, making conflict resolution and communication essential skills for organizers. Getz et al. (2006) emphasized that effective conflict management enhances the overall sustainability of community events. Training in these areas prepares committee members to address disputes constructively while maintaining strong relationships with stakeholders. The Dickson case highlighted communication breakdowns between organizers and vendors, particularly in 2023, when complaints about booth placement and logistics went unresolved, eroding trust and potentially impacting future participation. Brudney (2016) highlighted the value of workshops on negotiation techniques, active listening, and mediation for building trust and resolving tensions between vendors, volunteers, and attendees. Clear communication strategies can prevent misunderstandings and align stakeholder expectations. Clampitt et al. (2000) suggested regular updates through email newsletters, public forums, and meetings to ensure all parties remain informed and engaged. Providing stakeholders with a consistent flow of information reduces uncertainty and fosters a cooperative environment. This approach is particularly vital in small towns, where close-knit relationships can either amplify or mitigate conflicts.

In addition to proactive communication, organizers must be equipped to handle real-time challenges. Training scenarios that simulate common conflicts, such as vendor location disputes or attendee dissatisfaction, can prepare committees for on-the-spot resolution. Selman (2004) emphasized that conflict resolution training should focus on empathy and cultural sensitivity, as these skills are crucial for

navigating diverse perspectives within a community. Training in effective communication should extend beyond conflict resolution to include stakeholder engagement and collaboration. For instance, engaging local nonprofits or advocacy groups in planning can align the festival's goals with broader community interests. Knox and Mayer (2013) suggested that communication training programs focus on crafting messages that resonate with internal and external audiences, ensuring alignment and support across all stakeholder groups. With these skills, small-town organizers can foster an environment of trust, collaboration, and shared success.

The success of small-town festivals hinges on comprehensive training that integrates leadership development, operational efficiency, and stakeholder engagement. White (2022) found that capacity building through targeted training initiatives is essential for sustaining community events and emphasized the role of collaborative partnerships in enhancing local expertise. According to Sorenson and Epps (1996), municipal leaders can improve festival outcomes by leveraging local resources such as chambers of commerce, state agencies, and educational institutions, which are well-positioned to deliver customized training programs tailored to the unique needs of small towns.

Research by Bilderback et al. (2024) highlighted that programs like work-based learning, internships, and technical collaborations address staffing shortages and provide participants with valuable hands-on experience that directly supports festival operations. Such partnerships can help bridge resource gaps, particularly in rural communities with limited access to specialized training in event management. Similarly, Dreeszen's (1992) analysis of small-town cultural events highlighted the importance of engaging consulting organizations, state-funded resources, and local arts or music schools to expand the pool of expertise available to festival planners. These collaborations bring fresh ideas and industry knowledge, fostering innovation and professionalization within community-led events.

To help small-town festival organizers implement practical training, the following table outlines actionable strategies for practitioners, municipal leaders, and community stakeholders:

TABLE 1: A Framework for Training Strategies

Challenge Observed in Dickson	Training Strategy	Implementation Partners
Disbandment of the organizing body (DDA) due to leadership burnout and lack of succession planning	Offer leadership workshops for committee members on project management, delegation, and risk assessment.	Local colleges, chambers of commerce, or leadership consultants
Volunteer disengagement in 2023 was due to poor communication and a lack of role clarity.	Develop role-specific training for volunteers covering safety protocols, customer service, and logistics.	High schools, colleges, or nonprofits offering service-learning or internship programs
Vendor withdrawal in 2023 was due to dissatisfaction with communication and profitability.	Host workshops on booth setup, marketing, and customer engagement	Chambers of commerce or small local business development centers
No use of digital tools for coordination or feedback tracking	Train stakeholders to use event management software, online ticketing platforms, and social media tools	Tech programs at local colleges or partnerships with affordable software providers
Lack of municipal support and stakeholder alignment	Facilitate training in stakeholder engagement and collaborative grant writing	State agencies, local nonprofits, or consulting firms
Unresolved vendor complaints and communication breakdown in the final year	Provide workshops on negotiation, mediation, and active listening skills	Leadership development organizations, chambers of commerce, or continuing education units

Each strategy reflects gaps or breakdowns identified in the Dickson case (2021–2023), offering actionable guidance for small-town festival organizers.

Small-town festival organizers can adapt to evolving challenges and maintain long-term success

by cultivating continuous learning and knowledge sharing. Training initiatives emphasizing innovation, capacity building, and stakeholder collaboration enhance festival quality, strengthen community bonds, and promote sustainable economic growth through tourism and local engagement.

### Lessons Learned from the Dickson Case

The Dickson Street Festival offers a valuable lens for understanding the broader realities of small-town festival planning. Like many community-led events, it relied heavily on volunteer leadership, local business support, and grassroots promotion, common characteristics found across rural and semi-rural festivals in the United States and beyond (Knox & Mayer, 2013; Quinn, 2019). While every small town is unique, Dickson’s combination of rapid community engagement, economic ambition, and fragile organizational infrastructure mirrors challenges in comparable post-COVID revitalization efforts. This makes the case a valuable reference point for festival organizers navigating similar environments.

The Dickson Street Festival, despite its eventual discontinuation, offers valuable insights into the organization and sustainability of community festivals in small-town settings. Its trajectory highlights effective strategies while exposing critical challenges, providing actionable lessons for towns aiming to create impactful and enduring events. One of the festival’s most notable successes was its community-centric planning approach, which drove significant resident engagement and participation. The festival’s early success in connecting with local culture through music, vendors, and family programming highlights the power of aligning events with local identity. However, such momentum can be short-lived without systems to formalize these efforts. Getz (2010) emphasized that community-based festivals strengthen local identity and create a sense of pride among residents, essential for sustaining long-term participation. Aligning festival programming with a town’s unique characteristics enables organizers to build stronger relationships with attendees, promoting loyalty and continued involvement.

Strategic marketing also played a critical role in the festival’s early success. The Dickson Street Festival utilized social media platforms, particularly

Facebook and Instagram, to amplify its reach and generate excitement among local and regional audiences. Bazzanella et al. (2023) found that social media offers low-cost, high-impact opportunities for community festivals to increase visibility and engagement. The festival's use of professionally designed graphics, branded merchandise, and promotional posts featuring residents and businesses demonstrated the importance of consistent branding in building anticipation and fostering community pride. Effective branding strategies enhance an event's visibility and strengthen its reliability, creating a sense of ownership among participants (Bazzanella et al., 2023).

Several warning signs of organizational strain were visible before the festival's cancellation, but were not formally addressed. For example, the decline in vendor satisfaction and the increase in logistical complaints in 2023 could have triggered a review of planning processes or stakeholder engagement efforts. The lack of formal training in conflict resolution, operations, and sponsorship development meant that organizers were unable to adapt quickly. These gaps underscore the importance of proactive assessment tools and reflective practices throughout the life cycle of community festivals (Lengnick-Hall et al., 2011).

Another key strength of the festival was its reliance on diverse revenue streams during its early years. Local sponsorships, vendor fees, and partnerships with community stakeholders provided critical funding, enabling the event to grow. Baldi et al. (2022) emphasized in their study of rural music festivals that such events can serve as economic engines for small communities, provided they are supported by sustainable planning and consistent stakeholder investment. According to Getz and Andersson (2021), financial sustainability is a vital consideration for community festivals, and cultivating multiple funding sources is crucial for mitigating financial risks. However, the festival's later struggles reveal the vulnerabilities associated with overreliance on limited funding sources. Financial instability often leads to event cancellations, especially in small towns with fewer resources. Towns can mitigate this risk by diversifying their revenue streams through grants, community fundraisers, and tiered sponsorship packages (Getz & Andersson, 2006).

Despite its early successes, the festival faced significant challenges that ultimately led to its cancellation. One of the most critical issues was the instability of its leadership structure. The disbandment of the Downtown Dickson Association left the festival without a governing framework, resulting in a loss of momentum and institutional knowledge. El Archi et al. (2023) emphasized that leadership continuity is crucial for the sustainability of community festivals, particularly in small towns where volunteer committees often manage these events. Festivals are vulnerable to disruptions during leadership transitions when operational processes and succession plans are not documented. Establishing governance structures with clearly defined roles and responsibilities ensures that events are effectively managed and reduces risks associated with leadership changes (El Archi et al., 2023).

Maintaining strong relationships with vendors and stakeholders is another essential factor in festival sustainability. The Dickson case illustrates that disengagement from vendors due to logistical issues and profitability concerns can weaken an event's overall quality and reputation. According to Quinn (2019), building strong, transparent relationships with vendors through clear communication, incentives, and feedback mechanisms is vital for maintaining their trust and continued participation. Offering incentives such as premium booth locations, discounted fees for returning vendors, and promotional support can encourage repeat participation, strengthening the festival's long-term appeal.

Technology also presents significant opportunities to streamline planning and improve attendee experiences. Yeoman et al. (2015) suggested that event management software, mobile applications, and social media analytics can optimize festival operations and enhance outreach efforts. For example, online ticketing platforms and mobile apps that provide real-time updates on schedules and logistics can improve attendee satisfaction and reduce the administrative burden on event staff. These tools can also help organizers track engagement metrics, allowing for more targeted marketing strategies that better serve the community.

The Dickson Street Festival is both an inspiration and a cautionary tale for small towns seeking to organize community festivals. While its successes demonstrate the potential of community-driven planning, strategic marketing, and diversified funding, its challenges underscore the importance of stable leadership and sustainable financial planning. Small towns can create festivals that celebrate their unique identities, foster economic growth, and strengthen community ties by addressing these key areas through targeted training, collaboration, and effective governance frameworks. Sustainable festivals require more than enthusiasm. They demand long-term investment in leadership, planning, and innovation to adapt to changing community needs and expectations. With thoughtful investment in leadership development, operational training, and strategic collaboration, small-town festivals like Dickson's can avoid organizational burnout and create sustainable, community-driven celebrations with long-term impact.

While some aspects of the training strategies proposed earlier were visible in Dickson's early years, such as volunteer coordination and basic social media promotion, more structured efforts were notably absent. There was no documented leadership development, no vendor training program, and no use of event management software. These omissions likely contributed to the breakdown in communication, retention, and planning by 2023. The Dickson case illustrates that passion and participation are not substitutes for professionalization and training, especially as festivals grow in size and complexity.

## Conclusion

As explored throughout this paper, the Dickson Street Festival's rise and fall offer both inspiration and caution for small-town festival organizers. By integrating case-based evidence with literature-informed strategies, this study highlights that successful festivals rely on enthusiasm and the infrastructure that supports leadership, training, and community trust. This duality makes the case especially valuable for theory-building and practical application. Future research could explore similar case studies through interviews with festival organizers, vendors, and municipal leaders to deepen

understanding of how training and leadership development intersect with festival sustainability.

Festivals are essential to the social and economic fabric of small towns, serving as platforms for community pride, cultural celebration, and economic growth. Events like the Dickson Street Festival demonstrate how these gatherings can drive local economies by attracting visitors, promoting small businesses, and fostering stronger connections among residents. Beyond their financial impact, festivals provide a space for communities to come together, share their unique heritage, and create lasting memories, reinforcing the sense of identity and belonging that defines small-town living. However, the challenges experienced by the Dickson Street Festival highlight the importance of planning, sustainable funding, and effective leadership. Sustainable rural event tourism must be grounded in long-term community development strategies that balance cultural celebration, economic viability, and planning continuity (Thomas, 2023). Festivals that lack organizational infrastructure are often vulnerable to disruptions, as demonstrated by the event's eventual cancellation due to insufficient resources, declining participation, and the disbandment of its primary organizing body, the DDA. Addressing these vulnerabilities requires comprehensive training programs that equip festival committees, volunteers, and vendors with the tools to plan and execute successful events. This includes training in digital tools to improve logistics and communication, conflict resolution skills to maintain stakeholder trust, and structured volunteer preparation to ensure smooth event execution, all areas where the Dickson Street Festival showed apparent gaps as the event matured. Research by Bilderback et al. (2024) emphasized the value of work-based learning and technical collaborations in addressing staffing needs while providing valuable hands-on experience for community members.

Local partnerships are key to sustaining small-town festivals over time. Sorenson and Epps (1996) found that municipal leaders can strengthen festival operations by collaborating with chambers of commerce, state agencies, and educational institutions to provide training programs and professional development opportunities. These partnerships offer additional resources and bring fresh ideas and

expertise to enhance the quality of local events. Additionally, engaging with consulting organizations and leveraging state-funded resources can help organizers address logistical challenges and ensure festivals remain relevant and innovative. As Backman (2018) noted, contemporary event management research increasingly emphasizes sustainability, stakeholder collaboration, and data-informed planning, priorities that directly align with the findings from this case. This analysis presents a call to action for small towns to view festivals as strategic investments in economic vitality and community cohesion. By prioritizing collaboration, innovation, and capacity-building, towns can create festivals that celebrate their unique identities and leave a lasting legacy of progress. This case reinforces broader

findings that community festivals serve as vehicles for generating social capital, promoting economic revitalization, and fostering civic identity when supported by consistent leadership and training (Getz & Page, 2016; Mair & Duffy, 2018). Long-term sustainability in small-town festivals depends on enthusiasm and attendance, as well as intentional investments in leadership development, digital readiness, conflict management, and volunteer capacity, which transform a good festival into a lasting community institution. Dickson County is also a key part of APSU's regional pipeline, with hundreds of its residents enrolled each year, highlighting how lessons from the Dickson Street Festival directly support the development of future leaders and the sustainability of civic life in Middle Tennessee.

## References

- Ahmed, A. M., Qiu, T., Xia, F., Jedari, B., & Abolfazli, S. (2014). Event-based mobile social networks: Services, technologies, and applications. *IEEE Access*, 2, 500-513.
- Alam, M., Gale, A., Brown, M., & Kidd, C. (2008). The development and delivery of an industry-led project management professional development program: A case study in project management education and success management. *International Journal of Project Management*, 26(3), 223-237.  
<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ijproman.2007.12.005>
- Anderson, T. (2017). *Transforming leadership: Equipping yourself and coaching others to build the leadership organization*. Routledge.
- Austin Peay State University. (2024). *2024–2025 Fact Book*. Office of Decision Support & Institutional Research.  
<https://www.apsu.edu/dsir/data/2024-25-FactBook.pdf>
- Backman, K. F. (2018). Event management research: The focus today and in the future. *Tourism Management Perspectives*, 25, 169-171.
- Baldi, L., Peri, M., Baldi, G., & Trentinaglia, M. T. (2022). Economic impact of an international musical event in a small destination: what benefits for local and rural development?. *Event Management*, 26(2), 419-436.
- Bazzanella, F., Schnitzer, M., Peters, M., & Bichler, B. F. (2023). The role of sports events in developing tourism destinations: a systematized review and future research agenda. *Journal of Sport & Tourism*, 27(2), 77-109.  
<https://doi.org/10.1080/14775085.2023.2186925>
- Bilderback, S. (2024). Work-based learning: A catalyst for leadership, organizational development, and economic growth in Tennessee. *Journal of Health Organization and Management*. <http://doi.org/10.1108%2FJHOM-07-2024-0312>
- Brudney, J. L. (2016). Designing and managing volunteer programs. *The Jossey-Bass handbook of nonprofit leadership and management*, 688-733.

- Capriello, A., & Rotherham, I. D. (2013). Building a preliminary model of event management for rural communities. In *Event Tourism and Cultural Tourism* (pp. 8-26). Routledge.
- Chang, E. (2019). Bridging an engagement gap: Towards equitable, community-based technology leadership practice. *International Journal of Leadership in Education*. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13603124.2018.1492504>
- Clampitt, P. G., DeKoch, R. J., & Cashman, T. (2000). A strategy for communicating uncertainty. *Academy of Management Perspectives*, 14(4), 41-57. <https://doi.org/10.5465/ame.2000.3979815>
- Claridge, T. (2018). Introduction to social capital theory. *Social Capital Research*, 1(4).
- Coy, J. A. (2019). *Customer Engagement Strategies Leaders Use to Sustain Small Businesses*. Walden University.
- Davis, E., & Lundstrom, K. (2011). Creating effective staff development committees: a case study. *New Library World*, 112(7/8), 334-346. <https://doi.org/10.1108/03074801111150468>
- Dickson Herald Staff. (2021). Dickson Street Festival: Music, fireworks to showcase downtown's growth, businesses. *Dickson Herald*. <https://www.tennessean.com/story/news/local/dickson/2021/06/07/dickson-street-fest-music-fireworks-showcase-downtown-businesses/7581234002/>
- Dreeszen, C. (1992). Intersections: Community arts and education collaborations. *The Journal of Arts Management, Law, and Society*, 22(3), 211-239. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10632921.1992.9944405>
- El Archi, Y., Benbba, B., Zhu, K., El Andaloussi, Z., Pataki, L., & Dávid, L. D. (2023). Mapping the nexus between sustainability and digitalization in tourist destinations: a bibliometric analysis. *Sustainability*, 15(12), 9717. <https://doi.org/10.3390/su15129717>
- Elkington, J., & Rowlands, I. H. (1999). Cannibals with forks: The triple bottom line of 21st century business. *Alternatives Journal*, 25(4), 42.
- Frost, W., & Laing, J. (2018). Avoiding burnout: the succession planning, governance and resourcing of rural tourism festivals. In *Rural Tourism* (pp. 166-185). Routledge.
- Gadd, C. (2021). Dickson Street Festival on Saturday: Combines fireworks, arts and proven, new businesses. *Nashville Tennessean*. <https://www.tennessean.com/story/news/local/dickson/2021/06/23/dickson-street-fest-saturday-combines-fireworks-arts-and-proven-new/5299323001/>
- Getz, D. (2010). *Event studies: Theory, research and policy for planned events*. Butterworth-Heinemann.
- Getz, D., Andersson, T., & Larson, M. (2006). Festival stakeholder roles: Concepts and case studies. *Event Management*, 10(2-3), 103-122. <https://doi.org/10.3727/152599507780676689>
- Halim, A. H. A., Zamzuri, N. H., & Ghazali, A. R. (2023). The Transformative Role of Artificial Intelligence in the Event Management Industry. *Journal of International Business, Economics and Entrepreneurship*, 8(2), 98-98. <https://doi.org/10.24191/jibe.v8i2.24045>
- Harb, A. A., Fowler, D., Chang, H. J., Blum, S. C., & Alakaleek, W. (2019). Social media as a marketing tool for events. *Journal of Hospitality and Tourism Technology*, 10(1), 28-44.

- Knox, P., & Mayer, H. (2013). *Small town sustainability: Economic, social, and environmental innovation*. Walter de Gruyter.
- Kristiansen, E., Solem, B. A., Dille, T., & Houlihan, B. (2021). Stakeholder management of temporary sport event organizations. *Event Management*, 25(6), 619-639. <https://doi.org/10.3727/152599521X16106577965080>
- Lengnick-Hall, C. A., Beck, T. E., & Lengnick-Hall, M. L. (2011). Developing a capacity for organizational resilience through strategic human resource management. *Human Resource Management Review*, 21(3), 243-255. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.hrmr.2010.07.001>
- Lopes, A., Scafuto, I. C., Serra, F., Ferreira, M. P., & Maccari, E. A. (2024). Exploring the role of organizational learning in enhancing project management methods within the event project-based sector. *Event Management*. <https://doi.org/10.3727/152599524X17229013810167>
- Lurie, S. A. (2022). Dickson Street Festival showcases city's best. *Dickson Post*. <https://mainstreetmediatn.com/articles/dicksonpost/dickson-street-festival-showcases-citys-best/>
- Lurie, S. A. (2024). Dickson won't have 2024 Street Festival. *Dickson Post*. <https://mainstreetmediatn.com/articles/dicksonpost/dickson-wont-have-2024-street-festival/>
- Mair, J., & Duffy, M. (2018). The role of festivals in strengthening social capital in rural communities. *Event Management*, 22(6), 875-889.
- Mair, J., & Whitford, M. (2013). An exploration of events research: event topics, themes and emerging trends. *International Journal of Event and Festival Management*, 4(1), 6-30.
- McCarthy, V., & Rosario, H. (2025). *Social entrepreneurship and profitability: The case of Outpatch*. Austin Peay State University, Center for Applied Business Research. <https://www.apsu.edu/business/applied-research/files/white-papers/clarksville-economic-climate-and-social-entrepreneurship.pdf>
- Mohammed, S., Getahun, F., & Chbeir, R. (2023). Events management in social media: a systematic literature review. *Social Network Analysis and Mining*, 13(1), 70.
- Olotu, D. (2023). Volunteer readiness for emergency management at festivals.
- Panyik, E., Costa, C., & Rátz, T. (2011). Implementing integrated rural tourism: An event-based approach. *Tourism Management*, 32(6), 1352-1363.
- Putnam, R. D. (2000). *Bowling alone: The collapse and revival of American community*. Simon and Schuster.
- Reid, S. (2003). Community participation in rural events: The potential to develop and utilize social capital. In *Advances in convention, exhibition and event research* (pp. 42-51). Hong Kong Polytechnic University Hong Kong.
- Reid, S. (2011). Event stakeholder management: Developing sustainable rural event practices. *International Journal of Event and Festival Management*, 2(1), 20-36.
- Rothschild, P. C. (2011). Social media use in sports and entertainment venues. *International Journal of Event and Festival Management*, 2(2), 139-150. <https://doi.org/10.1108/17582951111136568>

- Selman, P. (2004). Community participation in the planning and management of cultural landscapes. *Journal of Environmental Planning and Management*, 47(3), 365-392. <https://doi.org/10.1080/0964056042000216519>
- Skoultos, S., & Tsartas, P. (2009). Event tourism: Statements and questions about its impacts on rural areas. *Tourismos*, 4(4), 276-291.
- Sorensen, T., & Epps, R. (1996). Leadership and local development: Dimensions of leadership in four central Queensland towns. *Journal of Rural Studies*, 12(2), 113-125. [https://doi.org/10.1016/0743-0167\(95\)00052-6](https://doi.org/10.1016/0743-0167(95)00052-6)
- Thirusanku, J., & Ai, L. P. (2024). Technology Innovation in Event Management. *Journal of Advanced Research in Technology and Innovation Management*, 10(1), 1-13.
- Thomas, A. (2023). Rural event tourism: developing sustainable rural event tourism for the development of the community. In *Event Tourism and Sustainable Community Development* (pp. 279-300). Apple Academic Press.
- White, K. (2022). Small Town and Rural Economic Development: A Case Study Analysis of Strategies for Success. *SPNHIA Review*, 18(1), 9.
- Wood, E. (2017). The value of events and festivals in the age of austerity. In *The value of events* (pp. 10-35). Routledge.
- Quinn, B. (2019). Festivals, events, and tourism. In *The Routledge handbook of festivals* (pp. 32-47). Routledge.
- Xing, Y., Liu, Y., & Cooper, S. C. L. (2018). Local government as institutional entrepreneur: Public-private collaborative partnerships in fostering regional entrepreneurship. *British Journal of Management*, 29(4), 670-690. <https://doi.org/10.1111/1467-8551.12282>
- Yeoman, I., Robertson, M., & McMahon-Beattie, U. (2015). *The future of events and festivals: Perspectives on future scenarios*. Channel View Publications.
- Yin, R. K. (2017). *Case study research and applications: Design and methods*. Sage publications.