



FINANCIAL GOVERNANCE & SUSTAINABILITY

Cash Management for Seasonal and Event-Driven Revenue

A profitable event can still create real cash strain. The budget and the cash timing are two separate questions

An association's annual conference can look profitable on paper and still put real pressure on the organisation's cash position. The problem is rarely that the event loses money overall. It is that the expenses arrive first, venue deposits, speaker fees, catering commitments, while a meaningful share of the revenue, registrations, sponsorship payments, arrives later, sometimes only in the weeks immediately before the event itself.

Which rules apply to your association?

The law depends on how your association is set up. A **company limited by guarantee** follows the Corporations Act 2001 (Cth) and its constitution. An **incorporated association** follows its state or territory associations Act and its rules. A **registered charity** also follows the ACNC Act and the ACNC Governance Standards, and some Corporations Act rules are replaced for charities that are companies. Check your own governing documents, and get advice before decisions with legal consequences.

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The Timing Mismatch Is The Actual Problem, Not Profitability

Cash trouble in event-driven revenue typically starts in exactly this gap, between when revenue is promised and when the bills funding that same event actually fall due. An event budget that looks fully funded on a spreadsheet can still put real strain on the organisation if the cash itself does not arrive in time to meet its own commitments. This is a timing problem, not a profitability problem, and it requires a different tool to manage than the annual budget alone provides.

The Practical Levers Worth Using Before The Agreement Is Signed

The most effective point to address this timing gap is before contracts and sponsorship agreements are finalised, not after cash pressure has already appeared. Negotiating earlier sponsorship payment timing, connecting directly to the sponsorship governance discussed earlier in this quarter, requiring deposits, and setting earlier registration and ticket deadlines all shift revenue closer to when the expenses it is meant to fund actually arrive. Many associations assume payment terms are fixed once a standard sponsorship or venue contract is offered. They frequently are not, and the best time to ask for different timing is precisely before anything is signed, not after the organisation is already carrying the cash strain the original terms created. An event that looks profitable in the budget and still creates cash strain is not a contradiction. It is exactly what happens when the budget and the actual cash timing were never examined as two separate questions requiring two separate tools.

Why A Rolling Cash Projection Must Sit Beside The Budget, Not Inside It

The budgeting discipline discussed earlier in this quarter recommended pairing the annual budget with a cash flow forecast, and event-driven revenue is where this distinction earns its keep. A rolling cash projection, tracking actual expected inflows and outflows by date rather than by financial year total, surfaces the specific weeks where a shortfall might occur, in time to do something about it. This connects directly to the reserves policy discussed earlier in this quarter as well: reserves exist precisely to bridge exactly this kind of real, temporary timing gap, provided the board can see the gap coming with enough lead time to draw on them deliberately rather than reactively.

Keeping Funds Properly Separated Throughout

A single event frequently touches several distinct funding sources at once, general registration revenue, sponsorship income tied to specific deliverables owed to the sponsor, and sometimes grant funding with its own conditions attached. Assigning every dollar to its correct fund from the moment it arrives, rather than reconciling this after the event has closed, connects directly to the grant compliance discipline discussed earlier in this quarter and avoids the risk of an organisation appearing cash-healthy overall while actually having very little unrestricted cash available to cover ordinary operating costs in the meantime.

- Negotiate sponsorship and major payment timing before contracts are signed, connecting directly to the sponsorship governance discipline discussed earlier in this quarter, rather than accepting standard terms and managing the resulting cash gap after the fact.
- Maintain a rolling cash flow projection specifically for event-driven revenue periods, distinct from the annual budget, tracking actual expected timing of inflows and outflows by date.
- Treat a line of credit as a timing tool for a confirmed, temporary gap, approved within the constitution and delegations, and only where the board is satisfied the association can repay it as debts fall due, not a substitute for addressing a structural funding shortfall the organisation has not otherwise resolved.
- Assign event revenue to its correct fund, restricted or unrestricted, from the moment it arrives rather than reconciling the distinction after the event has closed.
- Build a contingency allowance into event budgets specifically, since cost overruns often come from timing gaps and unanticipated costs rather than pricing. Before signing, check venue cancellation and attrition clauses, deposit refund conditions and force majeure terms, since these drive much of the cash exposure.

Cash timing connects the other financial governance disciplines in practice: reserves, investment, grant compliance, revenue risk, fraud controls, distress signals, tax concessions, bequests, budgeting, related-party transactions, committee structure and sponsorship. None of these disciplines function well in isolation. Together, they are what allows an association to grow its programs and its ambitions without growing its exposure to exactly the kind of financial fragility this quarter has been built to help a board see early and manage deliberately.

This is one of the practical governance topics built into our Board Director course, alongside the papers, tools and frameworks that turn the principle into your board's actual practice. [Explore the course](#)

Annie Gibbins

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BOARDROOM ACTION WORKSHEET

Cash Management for Seasonal and Event-Driven Revenue

Turn the resource into evidence, a decision and an accountable next step. Keep the completed record in your association's approved board records system.

1 What is the issue or decision?

State the governance question in one clear sentence.

2 What evidence do we already have?

Record the facts, source documents and stakeholder evidence available now.

3 What evidence is still needed?

Identify the legal, regulatory, financial, member or operational information still required.

4 What is the agreed next action?

Capture the owner, timeframe and how the matter will return to the board.

Action owner	Review date	Board decision or resolution

General education, not legal, financial, tax, clinical or governance advice. Confirm specifics at the relevant primary source or with your own qualified adviser. Nexus Leadership is operated by Lipstick Consulting Pty Ltd · ABN 15 619 120 482.

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