



EVENTS NOVA SCOTIA

Inspiring times

CHAPTER 8: OPERATIONS & LOGISTICS

Site operations and logistics vary considerably from event to event. But no matter the scale, there are always lots of details to be taken care of.

Site Development

Operations and logistics involve everything the visitor sees, touches, or does on your site. People working in this area need to have the unique ability to plan out every detail beforehand and then react professionally and quickly when the plans are changed due to weather, performer cancellations, or any number of factors.

Entrance Gates and Ticketing

If your event is gated, the entrance to your festival site must be appealing, welcoming, efficient, and secure. The signage at the gates will serve to entice people to enter your site and inform them of prices, hours of operations, and programming. The entrance can be as simple as a table with a banner stapled to the front and a staff person or volunteer welcoming visitors and collecting entrance fees, to a complex arrangement of a box office with multiple service windows, electronic ticketing system, and credit and debit card capabilities.

Some things to keep in mind when planning your entrance gate:

- Where will lineups form and will they affect vehicular traffic, block sidewalks, block driveways, or entrances to businesses?
- Do you expect visitors to arrive before the gates open? Where do they wait and line up?
- Make your entrance obvious enough that visitors will not walk onto your site without paying.
- Allow adequate room for visitors exiting the site. If possible, have an exit area separate from the entrance area to avoid congestion.
- Ensure the area is suited to wheelchairs.
- Make sure you have adequate lighting for night-time operation.

Helpful Tip: Have a Detailed To Do List and Schedule

Prepare a detailed list of everything that needs to be done. Include a timetable and assign responsibilities.

Identify milestone dates for operations and logistics; for things like getting funding commitments, lining up sponsors; and for finalizing the program and meeting deadlines for marketing. Keep track of where you are and the implications if you get behind.

Traffic and Parking

For vehicle traffic management, speak to the police, your municipality's traffic management department, the municipal bus service, if applicable, and other stakeholders to decide the best places for directional signage and to discuss potential traffic issues and solutions.

If your event site is adjacent to a provincial highway, consult with the Department of Transportation and Infrastructure Renewal regarding traffic flow, turning, etc. You may also want to consider obtaining assistance from the RCMP in managing traffic, particularly if you are expecting large crowds.

CHAPTER 8: OPERATIONS AND LOGISTICS

If you are providing private parking, the approach to your site and parking operations are the first impression many visitors will have of your event. If your event has designated parking areas, they need to

- be well marked and well lit
- have parking attendants that are easily identified
- have parking attendants that are exceptionally well versed in what the parking plan is and how to deal effectively with situations that arise

Communication in parking operations is key and radios are the best option.

Some events use a local group, such as a hockey association or Scout group, to assist with parking; they may raise money for their organization by asking for donations. This works well at smaller events, but we advise working with more experienced adult staff and volunteers for larger events.

Towing vehicles at an event should be reserved for those blocking emergency vehicle access or bus lanes only. If possible, tow the vehicle to a safer area rather than moving them completely off the site.

Communications

Depending on the size of your event, two-way radios are a very effective way to communicate. They are available for rent in most areas.

Some events may use up to three channels or more with security, parking operations, and general operations all having separate channels. No matter the number of users, radios (walkie-talkies)

will be most effective if all users are trained in proper radio-use etiquette.

One main communication point is how to handle emergencies (lost child, injured person). Be sure your staff and volunteers are well versed in emergency protocols (see Chapter 10).

Guest Services

Your guest services could consist of your staff and volunteers (readily identified by badges and/or t-shirts), walking the site ready to answer any questions. Additionally, you can set up a booth or tent and provide a variety of services, including stroller or wheelchair rentals and information on programming.

Event Program

People attending the event will want a copy of the program of events. This is a listing of what is happening where and can include a map of the site. Glossy, full colour, 20+ page programs may be tempting, but a photocopied sheet may suffice.

Post your program and schedule on your website and/or Facebook page, and make sure they are mobile friendly. This will also help lower the amount you spend on printing.

Visitor Information

Your local tourism association or tourist bureau may supply you with pamphlets or other material on local attractions, restaurants, and accommodations. They may also request a booth on-site to distribute information and answer questions.

Put a local map on your website (and in delegate's bags if you have them) as well as links to local tourist information.

CHAPTER 8: OPERATIONS AND LOGISTICS

Lost Children/Lost and Found

Your lost children area should be situated in a common, easily identifiable location. You may require more than one area depending on the size of your event.

When a child is brought to the lost children area, you should wait an appropriate amount of time and then announce the child's name and/or description over your public address system. In most cases, the parent will come looking for the child as soon as they are noted as missing. Make sure you obtain proper identification before allowing someone to pick up a lost child. A good rule is to ensure the child can only be released once a staff/security person is on hand to confirm the parent or guardian is properly identified.

Lost and found could be included in this same area or at the front gates or festival office. You will want a secure place to store valuables that are recovered.

VIPs/Special Guests/Media

You may create a separate entrance and welcoming staff for your VIPs, as well as provide a priority parking area. Be clear on their invitation where they should go and provide a map of the site. Whether VIPs and media have a separate entrance or not, have a VIP package or media kit available when they identify themselves at the gate.

Group Hosting

Groups require some special considerations, such as a coordinator responsible for

- communicating with the group (tours, schools, or other groups)
- welcoming them on-site
- selecting a meeting area for the group when they are getting together for a meal or leaving
- facilitating expedited entry (for example, giving out bracelets or tickets on the bus and bringing the group through the gate as a whole)
- having a festival program or information distributed before the group arrives on-site
- parking for the bus or other vehicles associated with the group
- dropping off and picking up

Seniors' groups especially will need adequate seating (preferably out of the sun or rain), and possibly some complimentary refreshments like water and tea/coffee.

Group Functions and Catering

You may be able to arrange catering with concessions on-site, or you may want to bring in a professional caterer for VIP events. Corporate groups may want to host a reception on your site, maybe even a dinner before the gates officially open if you are offering only evening programming. Caterers tend to be self-sufficient but check with them ahead of time to make sure they don't need electrical hook-up or cold storage.

CHAPTER 8: OPERATIONS AND LOGISTICS

Staff/Volunteer/Entertainers Catering

You should have a separate area where staff and volunteers can rest and have meals. Some festivals work out a deal with concessionaires, and staff and volunteers and entertainers can get their meals from the food booths. Other festivals have a separate BBQ or cooking area where this food is prepared.

Remember that if there is a separate area for food preparation, you will need a permit from the Department of Agriculture (Food Establishment Permit), Office of the Fire Marshal, and, possibly the local municipality.

Site/Waste Management

Recycling is a concern for events. The types of items and services offered and accepted vary considerably from region to region. Although recycling is compulsory in most cases, you will need to research what is specifically available in your area and what the rules are. For example, what happens when the recycling material gets contaminated with other garbage? How must recyclables be bundled for pick up? What are the municipality's policies for hazardous waste like empty propane tanks, paint cans, etc.?

Site cleaning should happen on a continual basis throughout the day, with a thorough cleaning overnight. Emptying garbage cans before they overflow is especially important and keeps your grounds looking professional and welcoming. Washroom cleaning and re-supply are also crucial to a successful visitor experience.

Be sure your food vendor contract states that the vendor is required to keep their site clean and free of debris.

A communal, easy-to-access area for three-stream garbage should also be provided for vendors, staff, and volunteers.

An environmental policy will help ensure your event does not have a significant negative impact on the environment and will flag all the issues you need to address.

The province provides resources and links regarding recycling and waste at <http://www.novascotia.ca/nse/waste/>.

Vendors

Vendors with festivals and events experience are generally self-sufficient. They usually need electricity and sometimes water depending on what service they are providing.

Vendors will more than likely need vehicle access directly to their booth or tent each day to re-supply. Contracts with vendors should clearly outline access times and when vehicles are allowed/not allowed on-site. You will also want to consider the following:

- Hours of vendor operation
- Expectations of operating hours in case of bad weather (Is it up to the concessionaire to make the call to open or to close, or is it up to the festival management?)
- Accreditation and access (Will you give the vendor a set number of passes to distribute and share amongst their staff, or will you give them an unlimited number?)
- Setup and teardown schedule
- Fee and/or percentage agreement

CHAPTER 8: OPERATIONS AND LOGISTICS



- Type of product allowed; for example, you may have a sponsorship agreement with a soft drink supplier, or, you may restrict the number of vendors selling a certain type of product, like ice cream or popcorn
- Prices they will be charging (to avoid vendors undercutting one another)

Keep pedestrian traffic flow to and from the concession area in mind. Make sure sight lines to the stage or pathways/sidewalks are not compromised by long lines to the vendor booths.

Be clear and careful with contracts for vendors (and other suppliers) and make sure you know what you are signing and what your responsibilities will be. For more complex contracts, get legal advice.

Food and Beverage

In smaller community events, the food service is often provided by a local volunteer group that does all the purchasing, preparing, and selling. Proceeds either go back to the festival or are split with the volunteer group. For events expecting large crowds, experienced food service operators are the best option for happy and satisfied visitors. These experienced vendors have the expertise and techniques for ordering supplies and preparing large quantities of food efficiently.

The type of food you sell depends on the vision and objectives of your festival and on your crowd expectations. There are many options for food vendors. Contact the vendors at your local farmers market as well as known food trucks if you have space for them. You will be able to determine what works best and which vendors are the most professional to deal with by speaking with other festivals/events.

Retail

Visitors to events are often looking for souvenirs or a unique “find” and a few retail vendors can add a lot to the general festive air of your event. Retailers at festivals tend to be local merchants or artisans and you can decide whether to include only one-of-a-kind and craft-type items, or to allow mass-produced products.

Outline items, logos, or themes that you will not accept on site in your contract with the retailers. Examples include pornography, hate literature or slogans, drug paraphilia, and/or political messages.

Festival souvenirs are a great idea. Take into consideration the kind of crowd you are expecting and order accordingly. The financial aspects of souvenir sales were discussed in Chapter 5.

Regulations and Permits

Vendors are generally responsible for arranging for their own permits and approvals. Although concessionaires are ultimately responsible, it would be advisable to contact the various departments/agencies yourself (see Chapter 4 for details) and double-check to make sure that everything is set for opening day.

Retail operations (including the festival’s souvenir sales) will most likely require a sales or vendor permit. Depending on your municipality, this could be a single event permit that covers all retailers on-site, or the regulations may state that each retailer must apply for their own permit.

Equipment

Developing a comprehensive list of required equipment is essential if you want to save money and staff power and still run an efficient event. Each area needs to determine their requirements, then create as complete a list as possible and integrate the information into a master list.

This master list will help in researching suppliers and in negotiating rental contracts or in-kind sponsorship arrangements. It will also aid in establishing delivery and pickup times before and after the festival.

Storage and warehousing issues also need to be addressed. Are there storage facilities on your site, or will you be able to place equipment as it comes in? Most likely, you will need some sort of storage, even if it is in a tent or under a tarp.

Types of Resources

Bleachers

Will you need to add bleachers to accommodate your audience? You may be able to rent or borrow them from the municipality. Otherwise, they can be expensive to rent and transport.

Tents and Tent Floors

Tents could be needed for concessions, info booth, first aid area, storage, logistics headquarters, programming, and retail. Most tent rentals come with sides that can be closed during rain or wind and at the end of each day. If your site could potentially become a swamp after rain, or if the terrain is particularly uneven, you may want to consider putting flooring in the tents.

All tents used on-site must comply with Canadian Fire Standards (CAN/ULC-S109-M / NFPA701). (Note that U.S. fire-treated tents do not meet these standards.) Your tent must have the original manufacturer fire retardant tag attached. Your tent must be equipped with a 5 lb A.B.C. fire extinguisher, or the appropriate fire extinguisher (depending on the type of product you are selling).

Helpful Tip: Tents

Include the paragraph stating all tents used on-site must comply with Canadian Fire Standards (in bold) in all your vendor contracts. The fire marshal will not approve a vendor to open if the tent does not meet regulations and fines may be placed upon the event if the rules are not followed.

Toilets

A toilet rental company can give you good advice on how many portable toilets are needed for the expected size of your crowd. Make sure the maintenance schedule is adequate for your event and you have enough supplies (tissue, hand towels, hand cleanser).

Wheelchair-accessible portables are available and required by law.

CHAPTER 8: OPERATIONS AND LOGISTICS

Barricades

You may be able to borrow barricades from your municipality, or, in some cases, from a local construction company. Metal barricades are generally used to surround your event site and for crowd control; the wooden-style barricades are most often used for parking operations or other cases where they need to be moved easily. Fencing can be rented for larger festivals and used for crowd control and may be required by the Alcohol and Gaming Division in order to get a permit to sell alcohol outdoors. They will restrict the licensed area to a tent or to a suitably enclosed area with minimum 4 ft. fencing.

Tables and Chairs

If you think you have ordered enough tables and chairs, add another 25! Tables and chairs get swallowed up quickly and tend to get underestimated during the planning stage.

Risers

Risers are sturdy boxes (generally 12 inches high), that can be put together to form a small stage or used to create a raised seating area. Staging is more expensive and complex to construct but may be needed depending on the size of your crowd and production requirements.

Electricity and Lighting

There could be enough power on-site to supply your festival, or you may need to add to what's available by renting or borrowing generators. Generators can be noisy, and extra work will be needed to insulate them and dull the sound. Diesel generators must be maintained, and the diesel replenished regularly.

Working with a professional sound and lighting company for music events or large multi-day events is highly recommended. These companies provide trained technicians who know the proper usage of electrical equipment and electricians who may be required for permit approvals.

Tools

Your logistics person could supply tools, for an extra fee as part of their contract, or the festival may choose to invest in buying tools that can be used each year. Small tools (hammers, pliers, staple guns, duct tape, cutters) are hard to keep track of. Whatever you buy or bring, know that you will need to re-supply at some point.

Vehicles

You can use personal vehicles or rental vehicles. For personal use, most events pay mileage or a flat fee. Sometimes rental vehicles can be provided through an in-kind sponsorship. Your festival may need everything from a three-quarter ton pickup truck, to cargo vans, to small buses. Remember to have petty cash or a credit card system arranged for gas or other incidentals.

If renting vehicles, keep in mind that drivers between 21 and 25 are subject to additional fees and that there may be restrictions on the types of rental vehicles they can drive.

Reflective Vests

Reflective vests can be purchased by the event, or possibly borrowed from the municipality or a local construction company. They are essential for parking attendants.

CHAPTER 8: OPERATIONS AND LOGISTICS

Office Supplies and Equipment

This is discussed in the budget section. In your first year, see if a sponsor will be willing to support the festival with in-kind use of office space and supplies. Startup festivals can often be organized from home offices, limiting your office supply needs to basic printers, laptops, Wi-Fi, and cell phones.

Trailers

Some sites will have enough indoor space for all your needs. Otherwise, you may need to have trailers to accommodate staff and volunteers. Some areas that could benefit from the use of a trailer include

- administration
- logistics
- volunteers
- artist hospitality
- production
- ticketing
- accounting
- security
- general manager

Money-handling should be done in a separate area or secure trailer; other areas could share space.

Tents could be used in the place of trailers in some cases, but you would need to consider security requirements, electronics, access to electricity, and communication lines.

Rent or Buy?

When discussing the merits of renting or buying equipment, keep in mind maintenance, storage, insurance, and replacement costs. Some items would be best to buy outright (small tools, reflective vests), but others are more cost effective to rent (tents, fencing).

One discussion that arises among festivals is buying equipment and then renting it out to other events. This is a great idea in theory, but may not be when you take a realistic look at maintenance, storage, insurance (including liability insurance), and replacement costs. As well, you will need a staff person to coordinate the rentals, invoicing, payment, delivery, and pickup.

Helpful Tip: In-kind Sponsorship

Don't restrict in-kind sponsorships to equipment. You could get someone to donate food and beverage for your entertainers, flights, car rentals, hotel rooms, technical services, or even a video of your event.



CHAPTER 8: OPERATIONS AND LOGISTICS

In-Kind Sponsorships

In-kind supplier sponsorships are invaluable to any festival, as long as they are supplying an item you would normally spend money on to rent or buy. Having a master equipment list makes it simpler for the sponsorship coordinator to negotiate contracts with sponsors. They may even be able to work out deals if no sponsorship is available.

Setup and Teardown

You will require anywhere from a week to a day before and after your festival for setup and teardown. Keep this in mind when booking your site dates. Setup and teardown always takes more time than you expect.

Key Takeaways

A site plan, even a hand-drawn one, is invaluable.

Operations and logistics cover everything the visitors see, touch, or do on-site. Be detail-oriented: have a schedule and a critical path and keep them up to date.

Have clear contracts with all your suppliers, including food and retail vendors.





For more information, please contact our Events Nova Scotia staff at Communities, Culture and Heritage at events.novascotia.ca/contact

