



THE SERVICE PLAYBOOK

Chapter 4: Operations Plan

Abstract

Chapter Four addresses the Operations Plan as the fourth core building block in the planning of Service operations, following the definition of Scope in Chapter 1, Headcount in Chapter 2, and Equipment in Chapter 3. The Operations Plan is defined here as the structured framework that consolidates these planning elements into a coordinated approach for event day delivery. An effective Operations Plan is structured around the attendee journey and integrates critical pillars including C3, workforce deployment, equipment planning, and contingency arrangements, enabling multiple teams to operate within a shared operational picture. This chapter also introduces the GCMA Operations Plan Template, and prepares the ground for Chapter 5, which will begin a two-part exploration of the practical Operations Documents used by Service teams on event day.

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In the first three Chapters of this series, we built the foundation of any Service operation: defining **Scope** (what, where, for whom), determining **Headcount** (how many and where), and identifying the **Equipment** required to enhance the impact of the Service team.

If you missed these chapters or would like to revisit them, click [here](#). They are essential for starting or improving your Service operations!

In this chapter, the focus shifts from planning components to operational coordination.

The Operations Plan consolidates these earlier building blocks into a single, actionable framework for event day, shedding light on who does what, where, and when. It also details timings, communication and escalation lines, and contingencies for each attendee-journey phase: arrival, entry, (ingress), circulation, seating, departure, (egress). This enhances integration with other functions and provides a unified operational picture of key attendee-facing activities.

What is the Operations Plan?

The Operations Plan is the blueprint that consolidates all processes, procedures, and guidelines necessary for Service delivery on event day. It serves both as an instruction manual for those executing the plan and a reference guide for those overseeing it, ensuring consistency and coordination across all teams. By clearly outlining responsibilities, timings, and dependencies, the Operations Plan establishes clarity and reinforces accountability.

A well-built Operations Plan mirrors the fan journey and connects every pillar into one coherent framework.

An effective Operations Plan ensures that attendee-facing event day delivery is coordinated, timely, and consistent with the event's wider operational framework. It enables multiple teams and functions to act as one cohesive system.

To achieve this, the plan must be:

- Accurate, reflecting the latest information on schedules, staffing, and procedures;
- Relevant, tailored to event-specific conditions and validated prior to delivery;
- Operationally oriented, written for those who will execute Service operations on-the-ground.

Its structure should mirror the fan journey and cover key operational phases, from arrival and ingress to circulation, seating, and egress, including contingencies for emergencies. This journey-based logic ensures that every touchpoint is supported and that the Service team's actions align with spectator movement patterns.



Finally, the plan must also be integrated with other operational pillars, including C3 (Command, Control, Communication), workforce deployment, and equipment planning to increase seamless operational flow across the entire event delivery apparatus.

Content Structure

An effective Operations Plan has its content organized into clear building blocks:

- Foundational information such as venue overview, key dates, workforce and briefing arrangements, equipment and signage plans, and the C3 communication structure;
- The main elements of the attendee journey, covering mobility, venue entry and screening, access control, ticketing, circulation, experience elements, sponsor/partner activations, viewing/seating arrangements, and egress operations;
- Risk and contingency measures, addressing emergency evacuation and issue resolution.

Applying the Who–Where–What–How framework ensures each operational phase is properly prepared and ready for coordinated execution.

This structure ensures that each operational area is addressed in the same logical order that event-goers experience the venue, helping planners anticipate needs and sequence actions. It mirrors real event day operations, creating a document that is both intuitive to navigate and practical to apply in the field.

Developing the Operations Plan

Developing an Operations Plan begins with compiling the foundational data that underpins all subsequent decisions.

Once this baseline is complete, the plan evolves by detailing the main operational elements of the attendee journey across structured sections.

For each of these sections, it is crucial to specify:

- **Who** performs the task (roles and staffing numbers)
- **Where** it takes place (moment in the Journey and area maps)
- **What** needs to happen (tasks, timings, procedures, and required equipment)
- **How** it will be delivered (regular and contingency measures, escalation channels, and key messages).

Good practice enriches each section with tables, diagrams, and resource breakdowns, to facilitate operational visualisation, resource allocation, and scenario planning. As far as possible, the plan should be finalised and circulated in advance of event day, ensuring its content is embedded into Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs), training sessions, and staff briefings.



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Integrating Safety, Security & Service Across Crowd Management Operations



When developed correctly, the Operations Plan becomes a comprehensive, precise, and operationally realistic reference tool that secures alignment and preparedness across the entire Service team.



GCMA members can download the full Operations Plan Template [HERE](#), to use as a structured framework that consolidates all building blocks into a clear, auditable event-day plan.

Not yet a member? [Join](#) our community today and gain access to our growing library of resources, exclusive webinars, monthly exchanges, and more.



Conclusion

The Operations Plan is the stage where planning becomes coordinated action, and represents the fourth building block in effective Service delivery. It transforms strategy, staffing, and resources into a single, unified operational picture that effectively guides the Service team on event day.

The next chapter will open a two-part series on **Operations Documents**, exploring how the plans developed so far are translated into the tools that drive event-day delivery. Until then, take a moment to assess whether your Operations Plan is truly current, practical, and usable for delivery.

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