

COMPETENCY-BASED LEARNING MATERIAL

**EVENTS MANAGEMENT AND
SERVICES NC III**



Sector	:	TOURISM
Qualification Title:		EVENTS MANAGEMENT AND SERVICES NC III
Unit of Competency:		Manage Contractors for Indoor Events
Module Title:		<i>Managing Contractors for Indoor Events</i>
Core 7		

Learning Outcome 1

Information Sheet 7.1.1

Identify event operational requirements

Event staging must be able to safely support the loads to which it will be subjected. It must remain stable and any covering like carpeting or cabling must be secured to prevent tripping and ensure safety. Soft goods like drapery must be kept away from **stage** lighting and be made of fire retardant material.

Technical/Staging Requirements & Considerations

Most events will require a combination of staging, lighting, audiovisual, and, increasingly, computer needs. As with other aspects of an event, the more time spent planning up front, the easier it is for attendees to walk away with the organizer's objectives in the forefront of their minds.

A sound system that is inadequate for the size or shape of the room will leave people straining to hear what the featured speaker is saying; eventually, they tune out and the message is lost. A series of inconvenient pillars can block out a presentation. At an event whose highlight was a speech by a famous humanitarian, he arrived from the airport ten minutes before the gala luncheon with a series of slides, instead of the expected Power point presentation. It took more than half an hour to find and load a slide projector. Because of work schedules, almost one quarter of the guests left before the end of the event, subsequently missing the key plea to support of the organizer's cause. The event coordinator had not asked what technical requirements the speaker had for his presentation.

Budget (Equipment Rental & Labour)

It is important to include all the costs associated with the technical aspects of an event. They can include equipment rental, labour (roadies, set-up, technicians), insurance, extra square footage and extended time rental at the venue for set-up and take-down, décor props, power, gas or diesel (if generators are necessary), and licensing fees. It is a good idea to build in a 10% cost overrun factor into the technical budget, to allow for minor damages or the technicians' overtime.

Square Footage & Extended Venue Use Time

Once the technical floor plan has been made, it may become obvious that the space is no longer large enough for the expected number of attendees. At that point, it may become necessary to book a larger site, with the resulting extra costs. Conversely, the decision to stay in the venue and reduce the number of attendees may also negatively impact the budget in the case of revenue generating events like seminars and trade shows.

Technical setup needs may also require an earlier entry and later departure. The rental companies should supply the event coordinator with the length of time needed for setup and take down (often called "striking" in the contract) of equipment. It is then necessary to check if the venue is available for this extra time and if what, if any, extra charges there will be.

Décor

The cost involved in transforming multi-use spaces like ballrooms and convention centers can be surprising. It is often possible to rent décor items from prop and staging companies, although it is also a good idea to inspect their condition before signing any contract. For an event where mood is important, the higher venue fee of a unique site like a museum or gallery may be mitigated by not having to rent expensive décor props.

Power

The venue contract should specify if power is included in the rental or if it is a separate line item. Some venues may not have enough power on site to meet the needs of the event, especially when extra lighting, sound, and other staging equipment is used. In that case, it will be necessary to arrange for generators to provide extra power. There will be a rental cost and, often, a cost for the fuel that provides the generators' electricity.

Licensing Fees

If music, copy righted images or text, film clips, or proprietary software will be used at the event, it is necessary to determine and pay the appropriate agencies a licensing use fee.

The Floor Plan

Create a detailed floor plan that maps out seating and tabling, sight lines, the sound & visual equipment, lighting, staging, exits, ramps, stairs, significant floor, ceiling and wall décor furniture (banners, logos, major floral or decorative items); in short, anything that physically affect the attendees once they are in the room.

Space per Guest

The amount of space needed per guest depends on the type of event. Twice as many participants can attend an auditorium style training lecture, compared to an interactive round-table training session in the same room. A sit-down dinner requires about 20 square feet per person, versus a cocktail reception, where about 8 square feet person will provide the right balance for both personal comfort boundaries and mingling. This does not include the square footage required by AV equipment and staging needs.

It is important to consider the comfort of the guests when mapping out the floor plan. They will be happier if a table designed to seat 8-10 only holds eight, or if, in row seating, a few inches is left on either side of their chair. For the organizer, this means that more square footage is necessary per person.

The experienced event organizer will know the balance required between enough space for guest comfort and enough closeness to generate and maintain an energetic social flow. This room "energy" is important. When people are crammed in too tightly, the constant inadvertent physical contact and heat makes them edgy and unsatisfied. When there is too much space, the room feels empty and the event may feel under-attended and without energy. Either way, the attendees are less likely to take away the messaging objectives of the event.

The same space may need to be rearranged for different purposes during the course of an event; day-time training sessions, a speaker dinner, and then entertainment and dancing. Create a floor plan for each of these uses, and determine how the room capacity shifts with each change in usage.

Audiovisual Space Requirements

Depending on the venue and the type of event, the AV space needs may be minor, or they can take up 10% of the space. Determine if there is an adequate sound system in place already, or if one will have to be set up. Will it be possible to wall mount speakers, or will it be necessary to place them on stands around the room, which will take away people space (allow for the empty space needed in front of the speakers, as it will be uncomfortable for guests to be too close to them).

For a rear projection screen (which provides the best image) the ceiling height will need to be 22 feet or higher and it will require at least 25 feet left empty behind it. For conventional projectors, it is best for sight lines if they are ceiling mounted (with a control booth somewhere in the space or in an adjacent room). If that is not an available option, then any seating arrangement must take the lines of projection into consideration.

If smaller screens are being used, a test run should be done with someone sitting as far away as the rearmost guests will be seated to make sure that visibility and sound are not an issue. For more complex presentations, it will often be necessary to allow space somewhere on the venue floor for the sound and light technicians' control consoles.

AV space needs should be included on the master floor plan along with what kind of electric and cabling needs are required for the equipment, as this may affect AV placement.

Stage and Décor Space Requirements

If the event requires a stage, it is not just the actual square footage of the stage that needs to be considered. Sight lines will determine how much seating is lost at the front, and there may be fire regulations that remove more seating area. Additionally, stage access stairs or wheelchair ramps will remove square footage from the room.

Décor items also take up space; as well as the objects, it may be necessary to create pathways around them to facilitate people flow. For example, a bottleneck at a silent auction bidding station may prevent guests from bidding on the item, just as difficulty in getting to a corporate display booth will stop all but the most curious attendees from making their way to it.

If display items like banners and signs interfere with sight lines, it will be necessary to plan any seating around these barriers.

Lighting Space Needs

Lighting can be very important in creating a mood for an event. If additional lighting is needed, it may take up floor space, especially if it cannot be ceiling or wall mounted. Safety requirements may require roped barriers around lighting stands or scaffolding. Candles or torches will need to be located within safety “islands” (the use of live flame may invalidate the event or venue’s insurance policy).

Computer & Software Requirements

The key to a successful event is simple—proper planning. Unfortunately, simple and easy are not the same thing. The more time spent envisioning and planning the event before it happens, the more smoothly it will run. Event planning involves moving from the high level issues down to all facets of implementation. When planning any event, from a small meeting to an international conference, there are some fundamental points to consider. Determining financial and marketing objectives, budget, location variables, accommodation, food and beverage considerations, technical needs, transportation and accessibility issues, registration concerns, guest entertainment, etc., along with the creation executable timelines for all these needs, will ensure the success of any event.

Even the smallest event can create a number of variables to consider. One unlucky corporate organizer booked a hotel meeting suite for a small gathering of out-of-town executives at the same time that the hotel was booked for a rowdy sporting convention. The meeting’s productivity was hindered by noisy groups of happy partiers wandering the hotel’s hallways. In this case, had the organizer checked what other groups had booked the hotel, a little more money would have reserved the penthouse boardroom, avoiding the noise issues.

Transportation

Large and midsize events, such as conventions, trade shows, conferences, seminars, and product launches often have a transportation factor to consider. For a larger regional, national or international event, choose a city with convenient, inexpensive air and/or rail travel. Transportation care for guests may begin at the airport, with meet and greet staff directing attendees to dedicated shuttles, motor coaches or limousines.

During the course of any event, a selection of these transport modes may be required to move people from one location to another (i.e. from an arena speaker event to smaller breakout groups at the convention hotel). Taxi and parking vouchers may also be provided. The event planner also needs to consider local traffic patterns, parking, permits, directional signage, and maps

Booking Transport

No matter the type of transport booked, there are some general points that should be clarified in the contract:

- The legal capacity of the transport

- Whether the cost is based on an hourly rate or an occupancy rate
- Whether there is an additional “garage to garage” fee
- If the vehicles will be available should the event runs overtime and, if so, the cost of the overtime charges
- The time it will take to provide a replacement vehicle(s) in case of a breakdown or an accident
- The transportation company’s liability insurance, both type and amount
- Are the vehicles dedicated to the event for the duration of the day/evening, or will they only be available for to and from trips, with other bookings in between?

Types of Transportation

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Marketing Considerations

- Providing smooth transport between key points creates a very favourable impression, especially if the event attracts non-local attendees. Many people find it stressful to navigate even small distances in an unknown city. They are more likely to be positively disposed towards the purpose of the event if their transportation between locales is painless. Almost everyone has experienced the stress waiting for a taxi on a rainy day—nobody enjoys it!
- If a major part of the event’s objective includes creating a buzz of excitement, or a sense of pampering, limousines and luxury motor coaches will go far toward creating the desired impression.
- Motor coaches can sport the event company’s logo, as well as running promotional material and the event schedule on their audiovisual systems.
- Motor coaches and buses also provide an opportunity for the event’s sponsoring company to put hosts on board to welcome guests and even emphasize any messaging or special parts of the event that the organizer wants attendees to be aware of.

Special Accessibility Needs

A good event planner will take into consideration the needs of all potential attendees. Consider the event’s transportation from the point of view of someone in a wheelchair. Does the transportation mode have a chair lift or ramp? Do the pick up and off loading zones have accessible pathways, or are there curb drops and muddy gravel? Talk to the transport company and location managers to find out what possible barriers there might be to disabled guests accessing the event and plan the necessary solutions.

Make sure that the parking areas have truly accessible wheelchair parking. Does the lot have only step curbs, or does it have properly angled curbs? Are there elevators or, if not, are there extra wide parking spots reserved for wheelchair vans on the street level, without any barriers? Are the ramps or any inclines at the recommended degree of angle for wheelchair users? Do the doors that are necessary for getting in and out of the lot open automatically or by a push-button?

Parking

If guests are arriving and departing in their own vehicles, the parking experience will be both their first and last impression of the event. Research the location’s parking challenges and plan accordingly. Ensure that there is sufficient parking, that is close to the event, and that it is reasonably priced. If a location cannot provide this, and creative alternatives are not within the budget, it may be necessary to look for a different venue.

Typical concerns around parking include:

- Closeness of the lot(s) to the venue
- Amount of parking spaces
- The cost to the event organizer and/or guests
- VIP parking
- Municipal parking regulations and permits
- Lot security and related staffing costs
- How to get to the parking lot
- Time that lot opens and closes (for an extra fee, lots will operate during their closed hours)
- Type of payment—coin, attendant, credit card or debit card—which can impact on the time line guest arriving at an event
- Competing events that may use the same parking spaces (sporting events, concerts, film shoots, etc.)
- Wheelchair accessibility.

A forward thinking **event planner** will check on whether the parking is within walking distance, what shape the sidewalks are in, whether the area is well lit and secure, et cetera. If the event is formal, will there be a problem for guests wearing heels? Is the event being held during a season when the weather is unpredictable? If it seems that there are barriers to the guests' enjoyment of the evening, try and budget for some **shuttle** vans to go back and forth between the parking and the **event**.

Permits

The cost of permits and any associated staffing should be factored into the event's budget. If parking and traffic permits are required, make sure that the contract states whether it is the responsibility of the venue or **event organizer** to obtain them. If it is the facility's responsibility, ensure that the contract shows by what date the facility must have them on hand. Get copies and check to see that the permits meet the discussed needs of the event. This should be done early enough to allow for the time that is required to process any changes, as municipal bureaucracy is not always speedy.

The permit issuer will often require a site inspection and walk through prior to granting the license. The official will want to know the number of people and vehicles, what extra noise or lighting will be a factor, and whether the event might block traffic. The permit may be issued with certain conditions, including the need to provide traffic directors (usually off-duty police officers).

Staffing

Depending on the **transportation** and parking needs of an event, it may be necessary to hire professional drivers, traffic directors, parking lot attendants and parking lot security guards. Consider the objectives of the event carefully, and then look at the practical aspects, as these staffing costs can quickly become a significant part of the budget.

Non-profit organizations may be able to use volunteers for these positions, but it will be necessary to provide training and have the proper insurance in place. Also, with volunteer help, no-shows can be problematic. It is important to communicate the importance of the task and have a firm commitment and a confirmation check-in shortly prior to the **event**.

When hiring professional drivers, make sure that the company supplying them provides a copy of their driving record and valid **insurance** with adequate third-party coverage. It is best to hire parking lot attendants from the company that manages the lot, rather than from a temp agency, as regular attendants will be familiar with the procedures. Make sure that they are not on overtime. Traffic directors are usually required to be either off-duty police officers or auxiliary officers trained in traffic management. For events such as fundraising walks, picnics, etc., it is often possible to use less expensive help. In some areas, personal safety may be fine, but auto crimes can be high. If this is a known factor, it is a good idea to hire extra security for parking areas. A patrolling human and security dog team, followed by paired guards on bicycles (more manoeuvrable than security cars and faster than walking) are probably the most effective methods of deterring break-ins.

Accommodations

Accommodation is an integral component of successful company retreats, out-of-town staff or client appreciation events, and trade shows or conventions that attract non-resident attendees. The event organizer should be prepared to negotiate rates, check in and check out times, concierge floors, hospitality suites, complimentary amenities, accounting procedures and time lines. If the event is being held at the hotel and a large number of guests are expected to stay there, it should be possible to negotiate the use of the concierge floors, meeting rooms and hospitality suites at a discount, if not free of charge.

It is very important that even the smallest detail that is discussed and agreed upon be confirmed in writing from the hotel. Staff changes and poor documentation on the part of the hotel can derail the best plans of an event coordinator.

Check In & Check Out

Times

As guests may be arriving from early morning to late night, see if the hotel can accommodate early check in times (hotels typically allow guests to check in after 3pm). If the hotel is fully booked and unable to provide this service, request a secure, staffed room that arriving guests can leave their baggage in. Will the hotel provide hospitality suites with coffee or cocktail service, health club/pool privileges, etc., for early arrivals? On the departure day, will it be possible to provide similar services for event guests whose flights are leaving after check out time (usually between 11am and 1pm)?