

5. What to plan

5.1. How to design your venue

It is important at an Event that the field of play, i.e. where the competition takes place, has been properly laid out and planned. Obviously you need to know prior to the Event where exactly all the sports activity will take place.

However, there are also many other spaces that need to be planned. Designing your venue is a critical part of the planning process. This can be done using **Venue layout drawings**. These can be as simple as a hand drawn sketch of the venue with all the different spaces identified on it. If the venue you are using already has plans or drawings then it will make it even more straightforward.

There are a number of benefits of using venue lay out drawings. These include:

- Ensuring in advance of the Event that your team has identified the best location for each component of the Event
- Helps your team make best use of space
- Helps plan the flow of athletes and spectators
- Great training and information tool – easier to show someone on a drawing where everything is happening rather than describing it
- Assists in the set-up on the Event day
- Safety – if there needs to be an evacuation, the escape route should be identified on the venue map

The spaces that you need to plan for when designing your venue relate closely to the components of an Event covered in **Section 2**. These include:

Sport

- Field of Play
- Staging area
- Athlete changing area
- Athlete toilets
- Head Coach Check-in
- Sports Information Desk
- Competition Management Office
- Results posting area
- Awards area (Incl. Podium, Awards Staging)
- Athlete lunch area (where possible)

General

- Event Management Office
- Medical Centre
- Family Centre (where possible)
- Information desk
- Volunteer check-in desk
- Volunteer break area (where possible)
- PA announcement area
- General storage area
- Delivery drop off/pick up point (if necessary)
- Spectator seating
- Public toilets
- Public catering area
- Waste disposal point
- Merchandise area (where applicable)

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|------------------------------------|----------------------------------|-----------------------|
| Transport
& Parking | • Athlete drop-off/pick up point | • Guest/Media parking |
| | • Athlete parking | • Volunteer parking |
| | • Public parking | • Disabled parking |
| | • Emergency vehicle parking | |

Working on the list above will ensure that the most suitable space is identified for each function and that access and pedestrian routes are pre-planned, leading to an overall well run event

Note: The *Event Management Office* is a room (or desk if a room is not available) that acts as a 'back office' for your event. It should be available to the event management team for meetings, storage of documents (e.g. forms, reports), and general administration. It is also where the communications desk should be located.

5.1.1. Restricted areas

Restricted areas (or blue zones as they are called at a Special Olympics Ireland Games) are simply parts of the venue which you need to control access to, either for security reasons or simply for ease of running the event. Examples include; changing areas, field of play, staging area, awards, etc.

When planning your venue decide what areas are restricted then mark them as such on your venue layout drawing. The main benefit of planning this way is that it makes it easier for your team to run the event because it keeps areas clear. Other benefits include:

- It allows you to plan more easily where Event Services volunteers need to be positioned to control access
- It makes it easier for everyone to understand where they are allowed access to
- It helps you to plan the best routes that people should use to move around the venue

5.2. Operations

Below is a summary of some of the key features of each Functional Area in Operations:

5.2.1. Volunteers Services

The following elements should be in place at all Events:

- Volunteer Check-in Desk
 - Welcome and check-in point for volunteers on arrival
 - Should be in a prominent location, easily found by arriving volunteers
 - Volunteers should show their *Special Olympics Ireland Membership Card* and identification at check-in
 - Role assignments should be confirmed at check-in and volunteers should be directed to their briefing area

Note: Volunteers will need to be told in advance to check in at the Volunteer Check-in Desk at a certain time on arrival at the venue.

- Volunteer briefing
 - Volunteers should meet their Coordinator
 - They should be briefed on:
 - The schedule for the day
 - Their role
 - Safety information
 - What is expected of them
 - Who they can contact throughout the day if they need assistance
 - There should be opportunity to ask questions
 - It is very important that all volunteers fully understand and are comfortable with their duties
- Volunteer bibs
 - All volunteers should be provided with a bib at Events
 - Volunteers should be advised in advance what colour top to wear under their bib and what colour trousers to wear
- Volunteer de-brief
 - Thank volunteers for their time and effort
 - Get feedback on how the day went from their perspective
 - Collection of bibs
 - Provide information on upcoming Events
- Volunteer 'Thank You' letters
 - Important to acknowledge and recognise the work of the volunteers
 - Should be sent as soon as possible after the Event

5.2.2. Family/Information Services

- At a minimum there should be a Family Information Desk
- Where possible, there should be a Family Centre at all Events. This will be an information resource for Family Members. Light refreshments may also be available to Family Members at the centre
- The family information desk will also act as the general information desk for the event
- Information about the Event, the Families Programme and Special Olympics will be available at the desk
- General information (e.g. on the venue, local facilities, transport options, etc.) should be researched in advance

5.2.3. Catering

- Athlete lunch area - An identified location where athletes and coaches may eat their lunch.
Note: Affiliated groups should be reminded to bring their own packed lunches
- Volunteer break area (this is often the same area as the athlete lunch area)
- Volunteer welfare must be a high priority at all Events

- Volunteer breaks should be planned
- For a full day Event volunteers should be provided with a packed lunch
- At all Events provision should be made for light refreshments for volunteers (e.g. bottled water)

5.2.4. Logistics

Logistics

- Work with other teams members to decide what furniture or equipment (e.g. tables, chairs, traffic cones, etc) is needed for the event (if any)
- Procure the required furniture or equipment
- Delivery & collection schedules
- Signage - Informational and decorative signage should be used at all events. In some cases sponsor signage will also be used.

5.2.5. Publicity

Media/Guest Services

- Prior to the Event the Media/Guest Services Coordinator will advise local media (including local radio, TV, photographers and print media) of the event and prepare fact sheets on the event for media
- Meet and greet all media that arrive at the Event and provide them with the information they require
- Escort media to the field of play if visit is required
- Submit results and/or press release of the Event to local media outlets and supply the Regional Office with any news, results, and photos of the event
- Identify, invite to, involve and escort guests/celebrities at the event

Ceremonies

- Opening Ceremony
 - Simple ceremony to provide Athletes with a sense of occasion and celebration
 - Should incorporate:
 - Welcome to all participants
 - Parade of athletes (if feasible), announcing each of the affiliated groups
 - Reading of the Athlete's Oath by an athlete
 - Reading of the Official's oath
 - Raising of the Special Olympics flag (if possible)
 - Short speech (by guest or Event Manager)
 - Declaration of the Event officially opened
- Closing Ceremony
 - Simple ceremony to close the Event
 - Should incorporate:
 - Lowering of the flag (if applicable)
 - Thank you to all volunteers
 - Congratulations to all participants
 - Relevant housekeeping announcements (e.g. check gear bags, etc.)
 - Closing declaration by guest/Event Manager

Merchandise

- Where available, official Special Olympics branded items may be sold at events
- If merchandise is available, it should be displayed at a prominent and accessible location at the Event
- The Merchandise Coordinator will manage the transport, storage, sale and return of merchandise items

5.2.6. Communications

- Two-way radios
 - Assess if they are required for your event
 - Procurement, distribution to the team and collection
 - Training on use of radios to relevant team members
 - Monitoring of radio communication
 - Set up and management of the communications desk (usually located in the Event Management Office)
- Public Announcement (PA) System
 - Requirement dependent on size/type of sport and venue
 - Used for:
 - Opening & Closing Ceremonies
 - Calling athletes to the staging area prior to competition
 - Safety announcements throughout the event
 - Encouragement of spectator support
 - Presentation of awards
 - Background music at the start of or between competition events
 - Emergency evacuations procedures
- The Communications Coordinator will work with the Volunteer Services Coordinator to ensure an announcer has been assigned to the Event (where applicable).

5.3. Event Services

Below are the key features of each Functional Area in Event Services:

5.3.1. Event Services

- 'Meet & Greet' Team
 - Meet and welcome people as they arrive (athletes, public etc)
 - Give directions and provide general information
- Stewarding
 - Plan how people will move safely around the venue
 - Monitor all that is happening at the event to ensure the safety and security of all participants and spectators
 - Plan for and assist with access for people with a disability to the venue
- Access Monitoring

- Control who has access to restricted parts of the venue (e.g. changing areas, field of play, staging area) to ensure the event will run without unnecessary interference (see **Restricted areas 5.1.1**)
- Capacity Monitoring
 - Ensure no part of the venue becomes overcrowded
- Venue traffic management
 - Adequate parking on site or recommended off site parking
 - Identified drop off/pick up points
 - Parking assistance from trained volunteers who will also keep access routes clear
 - Emergency vehicle parking
 - Identified disabled parking

5.3.2. Medical/Athlete Protection

- Medical/First Aid cover is essential at all Events
- A medical area must be identified at your event
- The number of personnel and level of service is in accordance with legal requirements but is also dependent on a number of other factors (e.g. type of sport, number of participants/spectators, proximity to hospital/clinic)
- Personnel must be easily identifiable – Green bibs, official uniform (e.g. First Aid agency)
- Collect, review and return athlete Medical Information Forms and Athlete Consent forms for all participating athletes

5.4. Safety

- The Safety Officer at your event will work with team members to identify and overcome any potential risks or safety issues
- He/she will undertake a risk assessment before the event and a safety check on the morning of the event
- Venue Emergency Response Plan
 - A Venue Emergency Response Plan (VERP) should be in place for every Event
 - It simply outlines the procedures to follow in case of an emergency at the venue being used and the responsibilities of the Event Team
 - The Safety Officer will ensure this happens
 - See **Toolkit 7**.