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Events Assessing, Planning and Monitoring

In this chapter you will cover:

- Event planning and monitoring concepts
- Key stages within the planning process
- Planning for festivals
- Planning for conferences
- Planning for events
- Evaluation of the events
- Impact of the pandemic on planning events and festivals

The purpose of this chapter is to explain and discuss the assessing, planning and monitoring of festivals and events. The chapter will present an integrated model for the successful planning of events, based on the authors' approach to planning as a generic subject area. In order to understand the planning of an event we will identify the fundamental elements of the planning process and work through them in a logical order. We will incorporate business planning alongside these main elements in order to develop an integrated approach. The whole concept of events and festivals planning and monitoring changed in 2020 due to the Covid-19 pandemic, which presented significant challenges for event managers, organisations and countries where mass gatherings take place. The chapter will discuss the impact of Covid-19 on events and festivals because of the need to reduce the risk of spreading infection at conferences, sporting, music and religious events.

It is worth noting that the chapter will focus on event planning and not organisational planning, which is concerned with strategic processes and positioning of the overall organisation and its business operations. This in-depth integrated analysis will be illustrated with practical examples, presenting different types of events that have a regional, national and international perspective. These case

studies will illustrate academic and industrial perspectives on each topic area. This process will be a prelude to the presentation of a successful event plan, constructed around seven key stages – this is a model first suggested by Watt (2001: 6), which allows the event planner to integrate business and event planning approaches. We will develop this according to our own research and thinking into a more logical structure of seven stages (see Figure 13.1). The chapter will refer to legislation, regulation and guidelines, where they have universal application, and we will also draw upon the relevant industry working documents.

Event planning and monitoring concepts

Once an organisation has decided or been asked to plan and deliver an event, it must first consider the reasons for the proposed event, its aims and objectives. Watt has highlighted the need for a feasibility study, in which research into the external and internal environment is conducted. Watt (2001) sets out seven stages within the planning process: idea and proposal, feasibility study, aims and objectives, implementation requirements, implementation plan, monitoring and evaluation, and future practice.

In Watt's model, the feasibility study is followed by an investigation into the aims and objectives of the event, which will necessitate looking at customer demands and the client's plan. Watt (2001) has taken a customer-led and strategic approach to setting aims and objectives, and this is evident in stages 2 and 3 of his model. The next stage of the process is to look at implementation requirements, which covers marketing, budget, resources and availability. Although these areas will have been covered in stages 2 and 3, this stage also looks at the economic effect of these on the business, event and wider environment. The implementation plan stage develops the logistical relationships and partnerships associated with the event. This part of the plan is integrated in stages 3 and 4. Watt's final two stages involve monitoring and evaluation, and future practice.

The planning process, mechanism or system that an organisation employs to realise an event is, in part, embedded in past experience, so before we deconstruct and reinvent suitable integrated planning mechanisms let's have a look at an integrated reinterpretation. Thomas (2019) explains that festival and event organisations use event management tools for planning and monitoring events:

[An event management planning tool] systematically observes services and service components and records and reports selected changes of state identified as events; identifies and prioritizes infrastructure, services and business process and information security events; establishes the appropriate response to events, including responding to conditions that could lead to potential faults or incidents.

■ Key stages within the planning process

Figure 13.1 shows the seven-stage model we have developed from Watt's basic ideas. In our model, stage 1 of the planning process begins with an assessment of the aims and objectives presented by the business, client or key stakeholders. With clear aims and objectives in place, the organisation can set specific bench-

marks and build a process for developing an event. This stage is also vital if the event is to be evaluated meaningfully at the end of the process, since the overall success and outcomes can only be determined if it is clear what the event was intended to achieve.

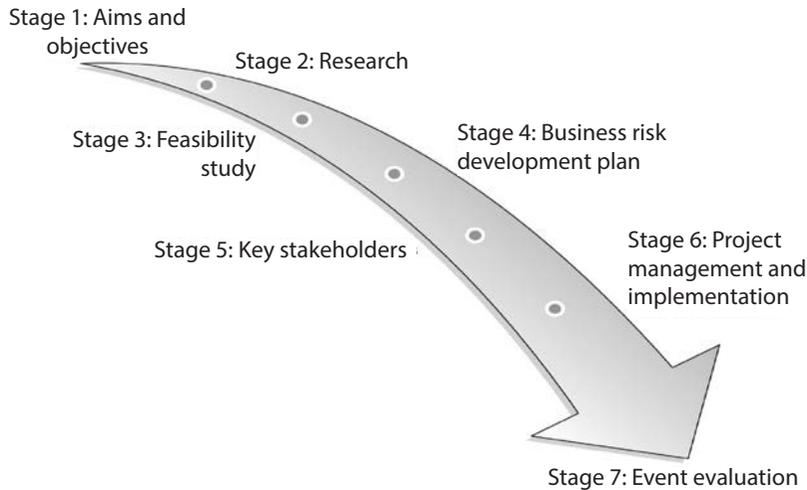


Figure 13.1: Seven stages of the event planning process

Stage 2, the research phase, involves accumulating data on all the key areas that support the event, business and existing sector.

Stage 3, the feasibility study, will have a definable focus. The study should examine and conclude whether the event is viable within the economic climate or business constraints, considering internal and external relationships and partnership arrangements.

Stage 4, the business risk development plan, will measure financial risks to and other possible impacts on the business from the event. It should also investigate the likelihood of both positive and negative effects on the external environment.

Stage 5 identifies the key stakeholders and will ascertain in what way and at what level they affect the planning process or event. They may, for example, be linked to the event by sponsorship, partnership arrangements, financial investment or they may be participating directly. Once their level of commitment has been determined, the role of the stakeholders can be integrated within the planning process. At this stage, event planners also need to select the appropriate personnel to head up the process and to ensure the integration of its elements.

Stage 6 is the detailed operational, project management and implementation period. The key concern here is how best to manage the event within the constraints that exist around it, in order to meet its key objectives.

Event evaluation, stage 7, is vital if the organisation is to learn, develop and build upon the failures and successes of the event. This evaluation, from a business perspective, must draw on the aims and objectives, the feasibility study and the key stakeholders. A customer evaluation would have been undertaken at stage 6.

■ Planning for festivals

We can define a 'festival' as an event that celebrates culture, art or music over a number of hours, days or weeks. Festivals require all emergency services that need access to the event to be represented within the planning process. Apart from the emergency services, a number of agencies should also play a significant role within this process. These may include the borough council, local authority or associated departments (Scotland has a different legal system and process).

Festivals, by definition, are a collection of events, which may be held in outdoor spaces, indoor venues or a combination of both. They are therefore bound by legislation and regulations. These legislative and regulatory frameworks will be presented as a guiding thread as we outline the planning process. The business administration, such as financial marketing, advertising and promotion, can also have a limiting impact on the process if it is not fully integrated within the process. Getz (2015: 3) states :

Planned events of all kinds are now viewed as legitimate tools, and this legitimisation process will result in more events becoming permanent institutions. As a consequence, there exist fierce competition, gigantism (of costs, infrastructure, media coverage, and the impacts of events), and rising professionalism with new careers specific to event tourism.

We will start by considering the planning of a festival. Most outdoor festivals are held on civic-controlled parkland, national heritage grounds or private land. A suitable site or sites should have been identified and researched before embarking on the licence application.

In selecting the site, the organisation will need to determine whether it is likely that a licence can be obtained, and whether the location is appropriate for the audience, facilities and external infrastructure. The selection and design of a site by the event manager must take into consideration all of these components if the event is to be successful. As part of this process, the event team should assess the services and utilities available on the proposed site. This assessment should consider, for example, whether the external lighting on site will be adequate for safety and security, and whether the type of roadway is accessible to emergency vehicles, customers and contractors and is likely to remain so for the duration of the event. This particular aspect must be assessed in all weather conditions and should take account of predicted attendance levels throughout the event.

As part of their assessment, the event team should identify external power conduits to be used by contractors and the production team. Direct feeds can be connected where external power outlets are operational. An on-site communication network can be established using the landline supply service if a connection is accessible through underground network cabling. This can also be a contingency in the event of a power failure during the event since communication can be re-established. Such eventualities should be covered by the emergency procedure plan, which is drawn up by the event team in association with other agencies.

Within the planning process, the movement of people within the site boundaries must be clearly defined. To maintain control and safety, it is vital to identify the areas where contractors can obtain access, both prior to, during and after the