

2026 World Cup™ Legal Checklist

Your last chance to get your (legal) house in order before kickoff.

Time is short, stakes are high, and the crowds are coming. The upcoming FIFA World Cup™ offers tremendous opportunity for businesses that are prepared, have taken proper steps and have protected their interests.

Use this *practical*, punchy checklist to spot and fix the issues that most often trip up businesses running event-related support services, promotions, watch parties, pop-ups, and brand activations in the United States. Assign an owner and due date to each item, and make sure you're in the position to seize this magical moment.

1) Brand Tie-Ins Without Tripwires (Sponsorship Exclusivity & Ambush Marketing)

What's at Stake: Even innocent football-themed promotions can look like unauthorized affiliation, triggering takedown notices or legal action. FIFA® is known for being an aggressive enforcer and protector of its intellectual property. Get on the wrong side of that at your peril.

- No FIFA®/IP on anything.** Confirm, with the assistance of legal counsel, that all ads, posts, T-shirts, cups, banners, and in-store displays avoid protected trademarks.
- No implied affiliation.** Copy must avoid 'official,' 'partner,' 'sponsor,' or phrasing that suggests endorsement.
- Use generic phrasing.** Utilize neutral wording instead of protected terms.
- Hashtag hygiene.** Ensure campaign hashtags are free of protected terms or confusing near-misses.
- Creative pre-clear.** Legal/GC department has reviewed all campaign materials, promos, and influencer briefs before launch.
- Influencer guidance.** Creator briefs ban protected trademarks, stadium imagery implying official status, and 'partner/sponsor/affiliate' language.

2) U.S. Entry, Visas & Travel Risk (Immigration & Visa Issues)

What Can Go Wrong (Fast): One delayed visa appointment can cancel an appearance, activation, or shoot. Build buffers and back up plans now.

- ❑ **Roster & timelines.** Maintain a list of all foreign nationals with visa status plus application/appointment dates.
- ❑ **Buffer time.** Build weeks of buffer for interview backlogs, RFEs, and passport returns.
- ❑ **Correct visa categories.** Match activities to the proper classification (e.g., meetings vs. work-authorized performers/crew).
- ❑ **Document readiness.** Ensure required documentation (invites, itineraries, proof of ties, prior visas, social-media disclosure history if applicable) is in order.
- ❑ **Port-of-entry prep.** Brief travelers on what to say (and not say) to U.S. Customs and Border Protection (CBP) about work vs. tourism, equipment, and length of stay.
- ❑ **Fallback plan.** Prepare remote/alternate plans (backup speaker, pre-record, local crew) in case of refusal or delay.

3) Lock the Deal, Lock the Risk (Venue Contracts & Risk Allocation)

The Legal Bottom Line: An absent or vague venue contract is how surprise invoices and liability land in your lap. Ensure that your (written) agreement is locked in, insurance is in place, and liability is properly allocated.

- ❑ **Scope & permitted use.** Contract clearly allows for the activities you anticipate (e.g., watch parties/brand activations, signage, alcohol service, and sponsor displays).
- ❑ **Indemnity.** Clearly allocate responsibility for injury, property damage, and third-party claims (including vendor/contractor acts).
- ❑ **Insurance proof.** Ensure both sides carry required coverages (GL, liquor liability if serving alcohol, umbrella limits) and share certificates plus additional insured endorsements.
- ❑ **Force majeure & termination.** Include rights to cancel or reschedule for security incidents, civil unrest, utility failures, or governmental orders.
- ❑ **Build/strike & overtime.** Specify load-in/out windows, union rules, and overtime rates to avoid surprise invoices.
- ❑ **Noise, occupancy, curfew.** Bake local caps and curfews into the plan and the contract to avoid shutdowns.

4) Licenses, Permits & Insurance You Actually Need (Permits, Licenses & Insurance)

Don't Skip This Because: Missing one permit or proof of insurance can shut down your event on the spot. Confirm that you're allowed to do what you plan to do, where you plan to do it and when.

Alcohol permissions. If serving/selling alcohol, secure state/local permits and trained servers. In Texas, the applicable authority is the Texas Alcohol Beverage Commission (TABC); in Georgia it's the Department of Revenue, Alcohol & Tobacco Division. In California, it's the Department of Alcoholic Beverage Control (ABC).

Temporary structures. Confirm that tents, stages, LED walls, or barricades are permitted, inspected, and installed by approved vendors.

Signage & street use. Are approvals in place for A-frames, exterior banners, sidewalk/street activations, or drones (if any)?

Capacity & fire safety. Identify occupancy limits, egress routes, and obtain fire marshal sign-off where needed.

Right insurance lines. Carry General Liability, Liquor Liability, Hired/Non-Owned Auto, and where advisable, Event Cancellation/Weather and Terrorism coverage – in limits matching contract requirements.

COIs on file. Collect Certificates of Insurance from all vendors (caterers, security, rigging, A/V) in a single shared folder.

5) Don't Get Sidelined by Taxes (Sales Tax, Local Fees, Income Impact & Reporting)

Why This Matters: World Cup™-related spikes in revenue, pop ups, merch sales, food service, and ticketed events can trigger tax obligations that businesses routinely overlook. Jurisdictions often tighten enforcement during major events, and temporary tax changes can catch even seasoned operators off guard.

Higher taxable income = higher tax bills. Increased revenue from World Cup™ activity may push businesses into higher tax brackets. Plan ahead for larger **estimated quarterly payments** to avoid penalties.

Temporary local tax changes. Some jurisdictions consider event specific tax increases (e.g., proposed NJ sales and hotel tax surcharges during the World Cup™). Local employers must collect and remit the correct rates during these windows.

☐ **Sales tax readiness.** Confirm whether your activities (merch, food & beverage, ticketing, sponsorship revenue, rentals) trigger state or local sales/use tax. Register in advance if required.

☐ **Venue-specific taxes.** Identify special local taxes (alcohol taxes, amusement taxes, hotel occupancy taxes, mixed beverage taxes) that may apply to your activation or event.

☐ **Temporary vendor rules.** Some cities require temporary seller permits or event-specific tax filings for pop ups, mobile units, or short-term retail.

☐ **Marketplace & third-party platforms.** If using ticketing, delivery, or merch platforms, confirm who is responsible for collecting/remitting tax—and get it in writing.

☐ **Recordkeeping for deductions.** Track increased expenses (buildout, staffing, travel, equipment, temporary structures) to support potential write-offs and defend positions in an audit.

☐ **Special event exemptions (don't assume you qualify).** While FIFA® may negotiate tax exemptions, **local businesses will not**—even if customers assume otherwise. Price and plan accordingly.

☐ **Cross state operations.** If your activation spans multiple states, confirm nexus rules and filing obligations for each jurisdiction.

☐ **Temporary Physical Presence in a State.** Often triggers state tax filing, collection, and payment obligations for several state and local tax types including sales and use tax; income taxes; and employment taxes.

☐ **Audit ready documentation.** Maintain clean, contemporaneous records of sales, comps, discounts, and exempt transactions.

6) Keep People Safe (Crowd Safety & Liability)

What's at Stake: Courts and insurers expect you to anticipate obvious risks and have a documented strategy. Most failures are predictable and preventable with planning and forethought.

☐ **Crowd plan.** Written plan for entry, queuing, choke points, and emergency egress sized to peak attendance.

☐ **Qualified security.** Licensed guards (where required) briefed on de-escalation and positioned at hotspots (entrances, bars, stages).

☐ **Barriers & sightlines.** Barricades prevent surges and maintain ADA access and line of sight to exits.

- ❑ **Emergency roles.** Staff know who calls 911, who stops the music, and who speaks to authorities/media.
- ❑ **Medical readiness.** First-aid kits, AEDs where required, and a plan for heat stress/dehydration.
- ❑ **Incident logging.** Document incidents (time, location, witnesses, actions taken) for insurance and legal defense.

7) Security Tech, Privacy & Data (Security & Privacy)

Data Is a Big Deal: If you collect it, store it, or scan it, you're deemed responsible for it. Keep data to a minimum and vendors on a short leash.

- ❑ **Minimal data.** Collect only what you need (name/email/ticket); avoid sensitive data unless essential (DOB, biometrics).
- ❑ **Notices & consent.** Tickets/signage/app screens disclose security screening, video capture, and data use with links to a privacy policy.
- ❑ **Vendor contracts.** App, ticketing, and security vendors provide data-processing terms, breach notice obligations, and indemnity.
- ❑ **Access controls.** Store data with role-based access, multifactor authentication, encryption at rest/in transit, and a short retention schedule.
- ❑ **Breach plan.** Maintain a 24/7 incident-response contact tree, outside legal counsel readiness, and draft notices for rapid use – just in case.
- ❑ **No facial recognition (unless vetted).** Legal has reviewed state-law implications and obtained explicit consent where required.

8) Do the Right Thing (Labor Rights & Ethical Considerations)

Before You Move Forward: Assume nothing about vendor practices. Always require proof. Reputational harm from worker mistreatment can eclipse any legal exposure.

- ❑ **Clean vendors.** Screen staffing, cleaning, and buildout vendors for wage/hour compliance and no child/forced labor in supply chains.
- ❑ **Written contracts.** Vendor agreements require legal wages, rest breaks, safety training, PPE, and proof of worker comp where applicable. Make sure you know the rules and apply them properly.
- ❑ **Overtime & meals.** Event-day schedules comply with state overtime and meal/rest rules.

- **Anti-harassment.** Short, event-specific code of conduct (including contractors) and a simple reporting channel.
- **Accessibility & inclusion.** Activations are ADA-compliant (ramps, routes, restrooms) and staff trained on reasonable accommodations.
- **Supplier attestations.** Key vendors sign a Supplier Code of Conduct or equivalent.

9) Employee Watch Parties (On-Premises & Employer-Sponsored Events)

Why This Matters: Even informal, non-commercial watch parties can trigger licensing, wage/hour, workers' comp, alcohol, and conduct risks. Treat these events like employer sponsored activities with real compliance obligations.

- **FIFA® public-viewing compliance.** Use only FIFA® nominated broadcasters, show the feed live, avoid editing, and do not use FIFA® IP beyond what the regulations permit. Ensure the space holds fewer than 1,000 spectators.
- **Attendance is voluntary.** Communicate clearly that participation is optional and not tied to performance, evaluations, or business purpose.
- **Workers' compensation awareness.** Employer sponsored events can trigger coverage for injuries. Reinforce that attendance is voluntary and not work related.
- **Alcohol service (if any) is tightly controlled.** Consider a no alcohol policy. If serving, limit to one drink, use licensed vendors, provide food and non-alcoholic options, and consider transportation support.
- **Conduct expectations apply.** Send a pre-event reminder that the employee handbook, code of conduct, and anti-harassment policies apply during the watch party.
- **Alternative option: time off policy.** Allow employees to take limited time off to watch games offsite; determine whether time is paid or unpaid for non-exempt staff.

One-Page Final Pass (Are All The Ducks In a Row?)

Think of this as your last-lap pit stop: a rapid, end-to-end sweep to confirm nothing critical was missed. Run this checklist in a brief huddle the evening before you launch or open the doors. Assign owners on the spot and close gaps immediately

- Campaign clean?** No protected trademarks/terms, no implied sponsor language.
- Visas confirmed?** All travelers cleared, backups ready.
- Contracts signed?** Indemnity, insurance, force majeure nailed down.
- Permits in hand?** Alcohol, structure, signage, capacity approvals.
- Safety staffed?** Security, barriers, egress, medical, incident logs.
- Privacy ready?** Notices live, vendors bound, data locked down.
- Labor sound?** Compliant staffing, codes of conduct, accessibility checks.
- Employee watch parties compliant?** Voluntary attendance, FIFA® rules followed, wage/hour risks avoided, workers' comp implications understood, alcohol controlled, conduct expectations reinforced, time off option set.

How We Can Help

Our team advises businesses on venue and facilities contracts, intellectual property, immigration planning, permitting, safety, data privacy, and workforce compliance. If you need knowledgeable, practical support ahead of the World Cup™, we're here to help.

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