

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) 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.

6) 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.

7) 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.

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.

About the Author & How We Can Help

This checklist was prepared by **Tanya Nebo, Senior Counsel at Clark Hill**. 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. **Contact: tnebo@clarkhill.com, 469.287.3913. For general inquiries: clarkhill.com/contact.**

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