



# AFP National Guideline on operational planning

## 1. Disclosure and compliance

This document is marked **For Official Use Only** and is intended for internal AFP use.

Disclosing any content must comply with Commonwealth law and the [AFP National Guideline on the disclosure of information](#).

### Compliance

This instrument is part of the AFP's professional standards framework. The [AFP Commissioner's Order on Professional Standards \(CO2\)](#) outlines the expectations for appointees to adhere to the requirements of the framework. Inappropriate departures from the provisions of this instrument may constitute a breach of AFP professional standards and be dealt with under Part V of the [Australian Federal Police Act 1979](#) (Cth).

## 2. Acronyms

|               |   |
|---------------|---|
| <b>AFP</b>    | Australian Federal Police   |
| <b>C3</b>     | Command, Control and Coordination   |
| <b>NPOL</b>   | National Priority Operations List   |
| <b>PROMIS</b> | Police Real-time Online Management Information System                                   |
| <b>SMEAC</b>  | Situation, Mission, Execution, Administration and logistics, Command and communications |

## 3. Definitions

**AFP member** – means a member of the AFP as defined in s. 4 of the [Australian Federal Police Act 1979](#) (Cth) (the AFP Act).

**AFP protective service officer** – means an AFP employee in respect of whom a declaration under s. 40EA of the AFP Act is in force (see s. 4 of the AFP Act).

**Appointee** – means an AFP appointee as defined in s. 4 of the AFP Act.

**Appreciation** – means a logical process of reasoning, the object of which is to determine the best course of action in any given circumstance from all the known factors available.

**Commander's intent** - means a clear, concise directive, verbal or written, that outlines the basic purpose of any given operation. It describes a command authority's desired end-state and thus is the unifying factor for focussing subordinates on what has to be accomplished in order to achieve the intended outcome.

**Concept of operations** – means a planning document, informed by strategic direction, which outlines in broad terms the proposed operational activity and the baseline and intent for all further operational planning.

**Initiating direction** – means a specific strategic-level direction (verbal or written), issued to a nominated operation commander, which describes the broad concept of an impending major operational activity. The primary purpose for issuing an initiating direction is to formalise commencement of strategic and operational level planning.

**Major or special event** – means an event that is considered to be a non-routine operational or security related activity that requires implementation of special arrangements by one or more AFP functional areas.

**Operation** – means a specific policing issue or activity requiring a planned response.

**Operation commander** – is a command function (not a rank) and means the designated AFP member or protective service officer responsible for the overall management of an operation, and for generating the commander's intent.

Only a member of the rank of Assistant Commissioner or above can designate an AFP appointee, who is not a member or protective service officer, to perform the function of operation commander.

**Operation plan** – means a detailed single-use plan which is developed for a particular situation at a particular period in time.

**Operation project plan** – means the project plan that establishes what the operation is, the outcomes, the timelines and the resources required to accomplish it.

**Operational site survey** – means a detailed security survey and assessment of a venue or location prior to the implementation of any additional security measures. It does not support the requirements of a specialist policing tactical level site survey.

**Planned operation or event** – means an operation where there has been opportunity and time to develop strategies, tactics, and contingencies prior to an anticipated operation taking place.

**Risk** – is defined in the [AFP National Guideline on risk management](#).

**Risk assessment** – is defined in the [AFP National Guideline on risk management](#).

**Risk management**– is defined in the [AFP National Guideline on risk management](#).

**Standing plan** – means a plan put in place to address ongoing risks in an operational environment (e.g. specific hazards, events or regularly occurring operational situations).

**Task commander** – is a command function (not a rank) and means the designated AFP member or protective service officer responsible to an operation commander for the command

of a specific function or operational activity associated with a planned operation or event.

For the other definitions which are related to, and form part of this guideline, see: s37(2)(b)  
s37(2)(b) (AFP [Investigator's toolkit](#)).

## 4. Guideline authority

This guideline was issued by the National Manager Operation Support using power under s. 37(1) of the [Australian Federal Police Act 1979](#) (Cth) as delegated by the Commissioner under s. 69C of the Act.

## 5. Introduction

This guideline outlines the procedures to establish and maintain a common approach as to how the AFP, both Outcome 1 and Outcome 2, manages operational planning for planned events. It outlines policy, practices and procedures that must be adhered to in all types of operational planning within the AFP and directly relates to both operation and standing plans.

## 6. Scope and limitations

Only those procedures that are applicable to the type of plan being formulated are required to be implemented. When a standing plan is being operationalised into an operation order, appointees must consider all aspects of the planning process and methodology outlined in this guideline.

With the following exceptions (outlined below), this guideline applies to all AFP planned operations and all appointees who undertake operational planning activities. Departures from this guideline should only occur in exceptional circumstances as dictated by specific business needs, and as per the [AFP Commissioner's Order on Professional Standards \(CO2\)](#).

### Exceptions and other guidance

This guideline does not address policy, procedures and practices related to strategic, tactical or investigative planning processes.

The [AFP Investigations Doctrine](#) provides the authoritative guidance that outlines the language and concepts used by the AFP in the planning and conduct of investigations.

This guideline should be read in conjunction with relevant AFP governance and other guidance. This includes the:

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- [Risk management](#) (AFP Hub)
- [AFP National Guideline on AFP health and safety management arrangements](#)
- [AFP National Guideline on risk management](#).

## 7. Policy

Operational planning helps define how the AFP should operate in practice. It informs:

- capacity needs
- how to engage and manage resources
- how to deal with risks
- how the operational objectives should be reached

and:

- is short range and focuses on formulating functional plans
- is informed by, and vertically integrates into, higher order direction and strategic planning
- is a proactive, rather than reactive, activity
- facilitates the influencing, rather than acceptance, of the future
- establishes 'what' is required (task) and 'why' (purpose) of an operational activity
- will vary in scale, purpose and duration
- requires continuous review and evaluation and must be flexible enough to allow changes without introducing confusion
- is a methodology that is aligned to established project management principles
- is an auditable process which identifies operational objectives and related risks, and establishes accountability
- is an inclusive process.

## 8. Operational planning process

### 8.1 Notification

Notification for a planned operational activity may be received:

- externally, via
  - government directive
  - partner/inter-agency request
  - community stakeholder request (non-commercial/commercial).
- internally, via
  - an initiating direction
  - response to operational imperatives/business as usual activity.

s37(2)(b)

### 8.2 Operation planning cycle

The planning process is flexible and allows AFP functional areas to adapt it to varying operational requirements, characteristics and situations. All the activities outlined within each phase of the planning cycle must be considered, but not necessarily carried out.

The phases of the planning cycle are as follows.



Figure 1 – Operational planning cycle

### Planning initiation

The following objectives must be considered during the planning initiation phase of the cycle:

- identify/engage with the nominated operation commander (note that it is best practice to engage with the operation commander at this point of the cycle, however there may be circumstances where it will be more appropriate to carry out this task at a later stage of the planning process e.g. when preparing to operationalise a standing plan)
- identify/confirm the operational intent, scope and objectives that the proposed operational planning activity will be informed by/address
- identify information and intelligence needs
- identify and establish a core operation planning team commensurate to the scope and size of the proposed operational activity
- identify and commence preliminary engagement with relevant AFP functional areas and stakeholder agencies
- ensure a clear and common understanding of planning roles, deliverables and operational planning timelines
- carry out an initial appreciation or risk assessment of the proposed operational activity
- identify supporting administrative requirements and strategies
- develop the initial planning document in the form of a concept of operations
- obtain relevant managerial level approval of the concept of operations.

### Operation plan development

The following objectives must be considered during the operation plan development phase of the cycle:

- confirmation of the initial planning strategies and assumptions as outlined in the approved

concept of operations

- development of comprehensive operational work breakdown structures and strategies including specific planning and functional area tasking, milestones and deliverables (operation project plan)
- formal and full engagement with relevant AFP functional areas and external stakeholder agencies
- completion of a formal risk assessment and treatment plan (in accordance with the [AFP National Guideline on risk management](#) ) on any proposed AFP operational activity (for major events or events with sufficient lead-in time)
- completion of an appreciation on any proposed AFP operational activity (for smaller events or events with limited lead-in time)
- monitor and review intelligence holdings and any threat analysis summary
- conduct operational (not tactical) site surveys
- review any relevant external agreements and legislation
- identification and matching of resources to operational requirements (capability, capacity and logistics)
- incorporation of contingencies
- utilisation of universally accepted Command, Control and Coordination (C3) principles, to develop a C3 framework which is commensurate to the proposed operational activity
- production of operation orders and relevant supporting operational or tactical documentation.

### **Operation plan implementation and execution**

The following objectives must be considered during the operation plan implementation and execution phase of the cycle:

- briefing of, and handover to, task commanders
- finalisation of operational capability and capacity requirements (e.g. training, exercises, rehearsals, logistics, etc.)
- operational deployment
- ongoing review and evaluation of the operational environment and planning strategies throughout deployment phase.

### **Operation planning finalisation**

The following objectives must be considered during the operation planning finalisation phase of the cycle:

- conduct post-operational reviews (e.g. hot or formal debrief)
- reconciliation and review of any operationally related financial, administrative and logistical support processes/resources
- evaluation of the overall operation and planning activity (to help future planning/operational activity).

Appointees must conduct post operational reviews in line with the

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procedures to prepare, submit and distribute post-operational assessments for certain categories of AFP operations or projects and the use of the emerging issues/lessons learnt case note entry in PROMIS.

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It outlines the

## **8.3 Principles of planning**



Appointees must consider the following 6 key principles when developing operational plans:

- **simplicity** – operational strategies communicated in a clear, concise, logical, timely and structured form
- **coordination** – effective management (deployment) of both internal and external resources and personnel
- **efficiency** – implementation of effective risk management/ appreciation processes to inform the safe and efficient utilisation of operational resources
- **flexibility** – incorporation of credible contingencies
- **foresight** – anticipation of potentially realistic developments
- **security** – consideration of security implications during all stages of the planning process.

## 8.4 Planning documentation

The planning process may result in the development of a family of related planning documents such as concept of operations, operation orders and, as appropriate, supporting (operation) orders and standard tactical plans.

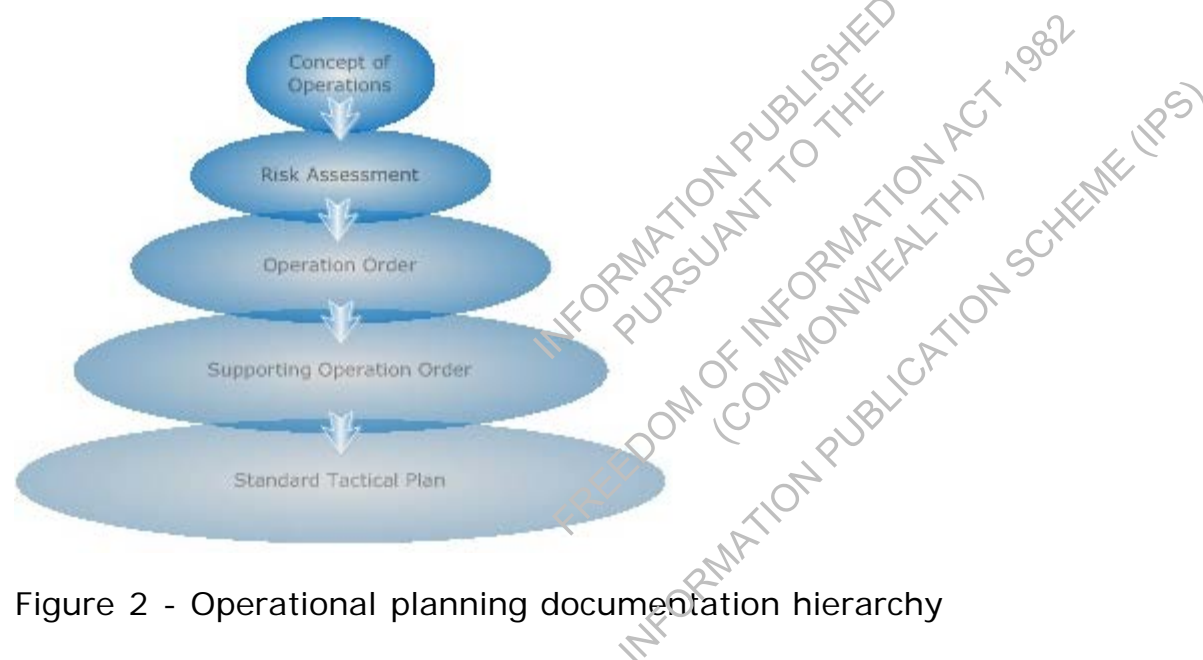


Figure 2 - Operational planning documentation hierarchy

Appointees must ensure that any planning documentation produced conforms to the hierarchical structure as depicted in figure 2, and that the content for each level of documentation is developed through consideration of the following guidance.

### Concept of operations

The concept of operations is a product of the planning initiation cycle. It must be a brief document, structured in Situation, Mission, Execution, Administration and logistics, Command and communications (SMEAC) format, which forms the baseline and intent for all further operational planning. The content should outline the proposed operational activity. It must include:

- the commander's intent with regard to an operation
- the overall picture of operational objectives
- the proposed methodology for realising those operational objectives

- the organisational capability and capacity that will be required to successfully execute the proposed operational activity
- how organisational capability and capacity will be synchronised, integrated into and support proposed lead agency or interagency activity.

The concept of operations should be developed by members of the core operation planning team. Once completed, it must be progressed through the chain of command for review and approval.

Progression to the next phase of the planning cycle, operation plan development, should not commence until the concept of operations has been approved. As such, consideration must be given to formally informing the approving officer of any time limitations associated with planning for the operational activity.

The concept of operations is a static document that should never be amended after approval.

### **Risk assessments and appreciations**

Appointees must follow the [AFP National Guideline on risk management](#) and the process set out on the [risk management hub page](#) when completing a risk assessment and treatment plan.

Assessing and managing risk is a vital component of the operational planning process. Carrying out a formal risk assessment enables the operation planner/s to:

- establish a reliable and valid basis for decision making and planning
- improve identification of opportunities and threats
- increase the likelihood of achieving outcomes
- effectively allocate and utilise resources
- improve operational effectiveness
- improve situational awareness and control
- establish accountability
- ensure operational security
- enhance work, health and safety performance.

There may be certain operational situations where a formal risk assessment is not a viable option (e.g. time constraints, minor or recurring operational activity). In these instances, appointees must conduct a basic operational appreciation of the intended activity.

The outcome of an operational appreciation is similar, albeit less detailed and thorough, to that of the formal risk assessment process. In its written form it should provide a valid and accountable record of decision making and planning.

Operational planners must document the AFP risk management process sufficiently to demonstrate compliance with AFP process. The level of documentation maintained should reflect the nature and formality of the risk management process employed for that particular operational activity.

When considering risk, operational planners must also note legislative risk management obligations, such as those dealing with work health and safety as outlined in the [WHSR Policy on Managing Work Health and Safety Risks](#).

### **Operation order**



An operation order is a product of the planning development cycle (operation plan). It is a document that must follow the SMEAC principle in structure.

The content of the operation order must outline the:

- current operational situation and organisational objective
- desired operational flow of events
- contribution of each individual/group involved
- organisational command, control and coordination (C3) arrangements
- means for subordinate commanders to translate operational level tasking into any action-orientated (tactical) plans and activities that may be required to effectively support the operation (refer to the section on standard tactical plans).

The length and complexity of an operation order will vary dependant on the circumstances of any proposed operational activity.

### **Supporting (operation) order**

In some cases an operation will be of such a complex nature and scale that it may be necessary to establish a modular system (sub-hierarchy) of operation order documentation. In such instances, a primary overarching operation order should be developed, the content of which must outline the overall picture of the planned operational activity.

This document may be supported by more detailed subordinate orders (supporting operation orders structured in SMEAC format) that are prepared by a functional area, or a task commander (in consultation with the core planning team), to satisfy the requirements of the primary operation order.

At the operation plan implementation and execution phase (handover to task commanders) the primary overarching operation order must be distributed to all members of the operation. The supporting orders may be distributed to just the functional area or team that is directly involved in the operational activity outlined within a particular supporting order.

The operation commander must receive and hold copies of both the primary operation order and all the supporting orders.

### **Standard tactical plan**

Standard tactical plans must be approved by the designated operation commander; however, they may not necessarily form part of operational level planning documentation.

The standard tactical plan must be structured in SMEAC format and should outline in specific terms the:

- current tactical situation, objectives and risk environment
- step-by-step procedures for the tactical briefing and deployment of members
- tactical command structures
- logistical requirements and support
- mutual assistance arrangements
- reporting requirements
- communication systems, etc.

## 8.5 Operational planning training

### Operational planning teams

Members of operational planning teams should:

- possess prior experience in operational planning, or
- have undertaken training directly related to the role of an operational planner, or
- undertake such training upon joining a planning team.

### Individual members

Appointees who are not part of an established operational planning team should also be provided the opportunity to seek expert guidance or undertake relevant training that will assist them in their individual workplace related operational planning tasks.

## 9. Further advice

Queries about the content of this guideline should be referred to the Coordinator, AOCC Capability Development.

## 10. References

### Legislation

- [Australian Federal Police Act 1979](#) (Cth).

### AFP governance instruments

- [AFP National Guideline on AFP health and safety management arrangements](#)
- [AFP National Guideline on risk management](#)

s37(2)(b)

### Other sources

s37(2)(b)

- [Risk management](#) (AFP Hub).