



OPEN COMPETITION ALLIANCE

Event Organizer Handbook & Field Guide

From first idea to final result

Built for the first-time organizer and the experienced director alike

This handbook is designed to take an event from concept through sanctioning, rule design, adjudication planning, venue and staffing, registration, scheduling, safeguarding, event-day operations, results, and post-event review. It is intentionally broad enough to serve dance competitions, performance contests, battles, judged creative events, leagues, fairs, hobby competitions, and other OCA-sanctioned formats.

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Using This Handbook

The Open Competition Alliance is designed to make competition more accessible, more imaginative, and more professionally administered. That means OCA does not assume every event arrives with a decades-old rulebook, a national governing body, a large staff, or an organizer who has already run twenty championships. A first-time organizer with a strong idea should be able to find a path into the system.

This handbook therefore operates on two levels. First, it explains the principles and expectations that make an OCA-sanctioned event recognizable as part of the Alliance: fair play, clear rules, competent adjudication, inclusion, safeguarding, score integrity, transparent results, and respect for the competitive community. Second, it functions as a practical field manual. It asks the questions an organizer must answer and provides tools for answering them before those questions become emergencies.

The central test

Could a reasonably capable person who has never organized a competition use this handbook to move from “I have an idea” to “we ran the event, announced accurate results, and know what to improve next time”? That is the standard this document is intended to meet.

Important Notice

This handbook provides OCA organizational guidance and general event-management education. It is not legal, tax, insurance, medical, engineering, fire-code, accessibility-law, labor-law, licensing, or financial advice. Organizers remain responsible for complying with applicable law, venue requirements, insurance terms, contracts, licensing obligations, safeguarding and reporting duties, and discipline-specific requirements in the jurisdiction where the event occurs.

OCA sanctioning does not guarantee that an event is risk-free, profitable, legally compliant, or appropriate for every participant. Sanctioning means that the organizer has agreed to operate within OCA baseline standards and any event-specific conditions of approval.

OCA Organizer Mindset

- Design before improvising.
- Publish before arguing.
- Clarify before judging.
- Build safeguards before an incident.
- Test systems before doors open.
- Verify before announcing.
- Document before memory fades.
- Debrief before repeating the same mistake next year.

If you can imagine competitors arguing about it afterward

Decide it before the event. Put it in the rules, briefing, registration information, or operating plan as appropriate.

Handbook Map

Part	Topic
I	Welcome to the Open Competition Alliance
II	From Idea to Competition
III	OCA Sanctioning
IV	Writing Complete Competition Rules
V	Designing the Scoring and Advancement System
VI	Selecting and Managing Officials
VII	Venue, Infrastructure, and Technical Planning
VIII	Budgeting, Money, Insurance, and Commercial Decisions
IX	Registration and Competitor Management
X	Scheduling and Run-of-Show Design
XI	Safeguarding, Safety, Accessibility, and Risk
XII	Inclusion, Culture, and the OCA Event Experience
XIII	Marketing and Communication
XIV	Event-Day Operations
XV	When Things Go Wrong
XVI	Results, Awards, Records, and OCA Reporting
XVII	After the Event
XVIII	Building an Event People Want to Return To
Appendices	Planning tools, templates, checklists, worksheets, and sample forms



PART I

Welcome to the Open Competition Alliance

What OCA is, what it is trying to build, and what organizers are joining.

1.1 What OCA Is

The Open Competition Alliance is an umbrella organization for competitive communities that want credible structure without unnecessary uniformity. OCA may sanction a traditional ballroom competition, a salsa or swing event, a karaoke league, a comedy battle, a sand-sculpture contest, a judged build competition, a performance championship, or an emerging contest format that does not yet fit neatly into an established federation.

The common denominator is not the subject matter. The common denominator is organized competition: participants enter, rules define the contest, evaluators or measurable criteria determine outcomes, and results are recorded.

OCA exists to strengthen the administration around that competition while allowing the discipline itself to retain its character.

OCA in one sentence

Standardize the competition process where fairness requires it; do not standardize the craft merely because bureaucracy finds sameness convenient.

1.2 Mission

OCA's mission is to expand access to fair, well-administered competition by providing sanctioning, education, standards, identity, event support, results infrastructure, and community knowledge across diverse competitive disciplines.

The Alliance is built around the belief that a competition can be serious without being stiff, inclusive without losing standards, experimental without being chaotic, and tradition-minded without becoming exclusionary.

1.3 Vision

OCA envisions a living network of sanctioned competitions connected by common standards of fairness, transparent administration, safeguarding, competent officiating, and reliable results. Some events may be highly traditional. Others may be new, local, playful, or deliberately unconventional. OCA's role is to help both kinds of event operate credibly.

OCA also serves as a living archive of competitive practice: discipline profiles, organizer-submitted rulesets, scoring models, adjudicator qualifications, event formats, and lessons learned from communities that know their own contests best.

1.4 OCA Cultural Identity

OCA is designed to feel alive. The Alliance is professional about safety, fairness, scoring, records, and official conduct while remaining energetic, welcoming, curious, and willing to say yes to unusual ideas.

- **Competition, Wide Open.**
- **Fair Play. Wild Ideas.**
- Game for Anything.



- Find Your Next Competition.
- A Better Way to Compete.
- We'll Sanction That.

1.5 What OCA Standardizes

- Baseline sanctioning and event-administration expectations.
- Clear publication of rules and scoring procedures.
- General adjudication standards.
- Credential verification and event-official accountability.
- Safeguarding expectations for youth-inclusive and vulnerable-adult contexts.
- Result reporting and correction procedures.
- Event IDs, OCA participant identity, and registry records where applicable.
- Minimum transparency around ties, penalties, disqualifications, protests, and appeals.

1.6 What OCA Does Not Automatically Standardize

- The technical definition of excellence in every discipline.
- One mandatory scoring system for every event.
- One mandatory competition stage structure.
- One universal division structure.
- One tradition of gender, partnership, costume, style, or presentation.
- One event atmosphere.
- One set of audience-engagement practices.

Tradition is welcome. Gatekeeping is not.

Organizers may preserve traditions that meaningfully serve the discipline. OCA does not require a tradition merely because it is old, familiar, or administratively convenient.

1.7 The Organizer as a Community Builder

An OCA organizer is more than a person who rents a room and collects entry fees. The organizer creates the environment in which competitors, officials, volunteers, families, spectators, vendors, and community members experience the discipline.

The organizer also becomes part of OCA's collaborative knowledge system. If your community has a mature way of scoring, a useful rule, a clever solution to a recurring operational problem, or a judging tradition that outsiders do not understand, OCA wants that knowledge documented rather than lost.



PART II

From Idea to Competition

How to move from “this would be fun” to a contest that can actually run.

2.1 Start With the Purpose

Before selecting a venue, building a website, or recruiting judges, define the purpose of the event. A competition becomes much easier to design when the organizer can state what the event is trying to determine.

Examples include identifying the strongest overall performer, recognizing technical excellence, rewarding creativity, testing proficiency against a standard, producing a head-to-head champion, generating a league ranking, selecting finalists for a larger championship, or simply creating a structured community contest with a credible winner.

The first organizer question

What are we actually trying to determine? Everything else grows from the answer.

2.2 Define the Competitive Unit

- Individual competitor.
- Pair or partnership.
- Team or group.
- Organization, club, school, or studio entry.
- Object or build submitted by one or more people.
- Head-to-head side or squad.

The competitive unit affects registration, eligibility, judging, results, prizes, and OCA records. If a team wins, decide whether the result belongs only to the team record, to each individual member, or to both.

2.3 Identify the Discipline

Use an existing OCA discipline profile when one fits. If the discipline is new to OCA, do not force it into an unrelated category merely for convenience. Describe what the contest evaluates, how the community normally determines quality, and who is qualified to adjudicate it.

New disciplines are opportunities for collaboration. OCA may ask the organizer or experienced practitioners to help create the first discipline profile.

2.4 Define the Target Participant

- Youth, adult, senior, or all-age.
- Beginner, novice, intermediate, advanced, professional, open, or mixed experience.
- Solo, pair, team, or mixed entry type.
- Local, regional, national, invitational, or open-entry.
- Community-based versus elite/championship-oriented.
- Restricted by qualification, previous result, membership, residency, or another legitimate criterion.



2.5 Design Divisions for a Reason

Divisions exist to create meaningful competitive comparisons or appropriate eligibility groups. They should not multiply simply because another organization uses a long historical list.

Each division should answer a practical question: Why should these competitors be evaluated together rather than separately? If there is no good answer, the division may not be needed.

- Age divisions.
- Experience/proficiency divisions.
- Solo/pair/team divisions.
- Style or discipline divisions.
- Open versus syllabus/required-element divisions.
- Professional/amateur distinctions where meaningful.
- Adaptive/accessibility divisions where appropriate and participant-centered.

2.6 Estimate the Field Size

Design choices that work beautifully for eight entrants may collapse with eighty. Estimate likely entries conservatively, then build a plan for both under-subscription and over-subscription.

Consider how many competitors can be adjudicated fairly in one round, how many performances fit into the venue and schedule, whether multiple heats or groups are needed, and whether the number of finalists is appropriate.

2.7 Select a Competition Family

- Scored/rubric-based.
- Ranked/placement-based.
- Recall/callback.
- Head-to-head or battle.
- Proficiency/standards-based.
- Audience-scored.
- Hybrid.
- Cumulative league/series points.

Do not select a format because it looks exciting on paper. Select it because it answers the competitive question efficiently, fairly, and understandably.

2.8 Build the Concept Before the Brand

A name, logo, poster, and social account can make an event feel real very quickly. They do not make the event operationally real. Before spending heavily on branding, make sure the organizer can answer basic questions about eligibility, venue feasibility, judging, scoring, schedule, budget, safeguarding, and result handling.

Pretty is not operational

A beautiful poster cannot explain a missing tiebreak rule at 10:40 p.m.

2.9 Competition Concept Worksheet

- ☐ I can state the event's purpose in one sentence.
- ☐ I know who may enter.



OPEN COMPETITION ALLIANCE

- ☐ I know what the competitive unit is.
- ☐ I know the discipline or can describe it clearly.
- ☐ I know what winning or qualifying means.
- ☐ I know the basic scoring or decision model.
- ☐ I know approximately how many entrants I can handle.
- ☐ I know whether minors may participate.
- ☐ I have an initial venue concept.
- ☐ I have an initial budget range.
- ☐ I know what official roles the event will need.



PART III

OCA Sanctioning

What sanctioning means and how to move from proposal to approved OCA event.

3.1 What OCA Sanctioning Means

OCA sanctioning is a formal relationship between the Alliance and the organizer. The organizer agrees to operate the event under OCA baseline standards and any event-specific conditions of sanction. OCA, in turn, recognizes the event within its system, assigns an OCA Event ID, may list it on the public calendar, may record results and participation, and may extend access to OCA operational tools or registry programs where available.

Sanctioning is not a guarantee that the event will be profitable, error-free, legally compliant, or universally well received. It is a commitment to a defined administrative standard.

3.2 The Sanction Application

- Event name and proposed date(s).
- Venue/location information.
- Primary OCA organizer and OCA ID.
- Organizer organization, if any.
- Discipline(s).
- Division or contest outline.
- Eligibility rules.
- Competition format and scoring description.
- Adjudicator plan.
- Tie and penalty procedures.
- Safeguarding information if minors or vulnerable adults may participate.
- Expected field size.
- Registration and public-information links.
- Requested use of OCA competition technology or operational tools, where applicable.
- Rules document or working draft.

3.3 Approval Statuses

An application may be submitted, under review, returned for additional information, approved, denied, withdrawn, or later amended. An event should not represent itself publicly as OCA-sanctioned until approval is granted.

3.4 OCA Event ID

Approved events receive a unique OCA Event ID. The ID is part of the permanent event record and should appear on result reports, OCA submissions, and other official materials when practical.

Only OCA administration should edit an Event ID. An event name may change; the underlying event identity remains stable.



3.5 Event Organizer of Record

Every sanctioned event must identify at least one OCA-Certified Event Organizer who is responsible for sanctioning communication, rule publication, official assignments, safeguarding coordination, result submission, and event closeout. Larger events may designate additional organizers.

The Organizer of Record should not be a ceremonial title. The person must have enough operational authority to correct problems.

3.6 New or Unrecognized Disciplines

If OCA has never sanctioned the proposed discipline, the organizer should provide enough information for the Alliance to understand the competition. This may include historical rules, sample ballots, common judging criteria, links to existing organizations, descriptions from practitioners, or organizer-developed rules.

OCA may use the application as the starting point for a new Discipline Profile.

3.7 Amendments After Sanction

Events evolve. Dates move, venues change, divisions are added, registration numbers force schedule changes, and judges become unavailable. Not every change requires a new sanction application.

However, material changes should be disclosed when they affect the basis on which the event was sanctioned: significant scoring changes, a new youth component, a venue change that alters risk, major organizer changes, or elimination of required safeguards.

3.8 Cancellation and Postponement

Cancelled and postponed events should remain in the OCA record rather than disappearing. Public status should be updated quickly and competitors should receive clear information about refunds, transfer options, replacement dates, and result implications.

An event that never occurs should not generate participation, placements, or registry points.

3.9 OCA Branding

Sanctioned events may use approved OCA branding in ways permitted by current Alliance policy. Organizers should not imply that OCA created, owns, or technically governs the discipline unless that is actually true.

The phrase 'OCA-sanctioned' is generally safer and more accurate than language suggesting that every technical rule is an OCA rule.

3.10 Sanctioning Readiness Checklist

- ☐ Rules are substantially complete.
- ☐ Scoring method is defined.
- ☐ Tie procedure is defined.
- ☐ Penalty/DQ authority is defined.
- ☐ The organizer of record is identified.
- ☐ The venue is known or realistically obtainable.
- ☐ The event can explain how it will select qualified adjudicators.
- ☐ Youth/vulnerable-adult participation has been considered.



OPEN COMPETITION ALLIANCE

- ☐ The event can report participation and results to OCA.
- ☐ The event has a realistic staffing and budget plan.



PART IV

Writing Complete Competition Rules

The rulebook is a promise: competitors should know what game they are entering before they enter it.

4.1 Rules Are an Operational Tool

Good rules do more than establish fairness. They reduce event-day decision fatigue. Every question answered in advance is one less question that must be resolved under pressure.

Rules should be written for the competitor and official who was not present when the organizer invented the format. Avoid relying on unwritten tradition unless the audience is truly narrow and the tradition is explicitly incorporated.

4.2 Recommended Rulebook Structure

- Event identity and governing documents.
- Eligibility.
- Registration and deadlines.
- Divisions/categories.
- Entry composition: individual, pair, or team.
- Competition stages.
- Performance or submission requirements.
- Required and prohibited elements.
- Judging criteria.
- Scoring method.
- Advancement.
- Tie procedures.
- Penalties.
- Disqualification.
- Late arrival and missed performance.
- Withdrawal and substitution.
- Music/equipment/materials.
- Costume/presentation requirements where relevant.
- Conduct and safeguarding.
- Results publication.
- Protests and appeals.
- Organizer authority and emergency modifications.

4.3 Eligibility Rules

Eligibility should be objective enough to administer. If a category is called 'Novice,' define novice. If an event is residency-restricted, define residency. If professional status matters, define what the event means by professional.

Avoid creating eligibility rules based on assumptions that cannot be verified or that do not serve a legitimate competitive purpose.



4.4 Age and Youth Divisions

If age matters, state the age calculation date: event date, calendar year, season start, or another rule. For youth divisions, clarify whether an adult must remain present, who supervises minors, whether mixed-age divisions exist, and what safeguarding requirements apply.

4.5 Partnerships and Teams

State whether partnerships are fixed, randomly assigned, rotated, or organizer-created. Explain substitutions, roster changes, minimum and maximum team size, and what happens if a partner withdraws.

Where competitive roles exist, use role-based definitions when possible rather than unnecessary gender requirements.

4.6 Required Elements and Prohibited Conduct

If the competition requires specific content, state exactly what is required and whether missing it affects the quality score, triggers a fixed penalty, or causes disqualification.

If something is prohibited, explain the consequence. A rule without an enforcement method invites inconsistent judging.

4.7 Time Limits

State performance duration, setup time, teardown time, grace periods, timing method, and whether music length is included. If overtime creates a penalty, specify who measures time and how the penalty is applied.

4.8 Music, Equipment, and Materials

Clarify who supplies music, technical format, submission deadlines, backup requirements, approved equipment, prohibited materials, power needs, cleanup expectations, and what happens if organizer-provided equipment fails.

In build or craft events, distinguish materials provided by the event from materials competitors may bring.

4.9 Advancement

Explain how many competitors advance, whether the number can change based on entry count, whether scores carry forward, and how withdrawals affect the next round.

If a round uses recalls, state the recall allocation. If a bracket uses byes, state how seeding and byes are determined.

4.10 Ties

Every scoring system should have a known tie rule, even if the rule is that ties are allowed.

Possible methods include a designated priority criterion, majority preference, additional performance, sudden-death round, head adjudicator procedure, mathematical tiebreak, or shared placement.

Decide the tiebreak before the tie

A fair tiebreak is a procedure, not a personality test conducted after two people happen to finish equal.



4.11 Penalties and Disqualification

Separate performance evaluation from rule enforcement whenever possible. If a violation carries a fixed penalty, apply the fixed penalty rather than asking each judge to punish the same conduct however they feel appropriate.

Define who can impose a penalty or DQ: individual adjudicator, head adjudicator, technical official, scrutineer, competition director, or organizer.

4.12 Late Arrival, DNS, Withdrawal, and No-Show

Define what happens when a competitor is late, misses check-in, misses a round, or withdraws. Use consistent terms such as DNS (did not start), withdrawal, or disqualification rather than treating every absence as misconduct.

4.13 Protests and Appeals

Competitors should know what can be challenged, who receives the challenge, the deadline, any fee, and the possible remedies.

Many competitions appropriately distinguish reviewable procedural errors from good-faith adjudicative judgment. A math error can be corrected. A competitor's belief that a judge should have liked their performance more may not be appealable.

4.14 Emergency Rule Authority

No rulebook can foresee everything. The organizer may need authority to make emergency operational changes. That authority should be narrow, documented, and used to preserve safety or the viability of the event rather than to manipulate competitive outcomes.

When a material rule must change after competition begins, communicate it to all affected competitors and officials before it is applied whenever possible.

4.15 Rulebook Quality Checklist

- ☐ A new competitor can understand who is eligible.
- ☐ The competition stages are clear.
- ☐ The scoring method is clear.
- ☐ Required and prohibited elements are identified.
- ☐ Advancement is defined.
- ☐ Ties are defined.
- ☐ Penalties and DQ authority are defined.
- ☐ Late/missed performance rules are defined.
- ☐ Appeals/protests are defined.
- ☐ The organizer has authority for genuine emergencies without unlimited discretion.



PART V

Designing the Scoring and Advancement System

How to turn “what matters” into an adjudication system that produces credible results.

5.1 Begin With the OCA Five Questions of Adjudication

Every organizer should be able to answer five questions before inviting judges:

- What is being evaluated?
- Against what is it being evaluated?
- How is each judge's decision expressed?
- How are multiple decisions combined?
- What happens as a result?

5.2 Scored / Rubric-Based Competition

Rubric scoring is useful when the event can identify several meaningful dimensions of performance or quality. A score may be a single overall number, but multi-criterion rubrics usually provide more transparency and better calibration.

Example criterion	Weight	Possible anchor
Technical execution	30%	Accuracy, control, completion, stability
Creativity	25%	Originality and effective development of ideas
Presentation	20%	Clarity, polish, communication, visual/stage effect
Difficulty	15%	Complexity successfully attempted
Overall effect	10%	Integrated competitive impact

5.3 What Makes a Good Criterion

- Relevant to the event's purpose.
- Distinct from other criteria.
- Observable by the adjudicator.
- Defined well enough to interpret.
- Scalable so weak, competent, strong, and exceptional performance can be distinguished.

Avoid rubric soup

If your categories are Quality, Overall Quality, Excellence, Wow Factor, and General Impression, you have probably scored the same thing five times.



5.4 Weighting

Weights should reflect actual priorities. If technical execution is worth 40% and creativity is worth 20%, the organizer is deliberately saying that technique has twice the impact on the result.

Judges should not secretly reweight criteria based on personal philosophy.

5.5 Anchored Scales

A 1–10 scale becomes more useful when numbers have shared meaning. Consider defining bands such as 1–2 deficient, 3–4 developing, 5–6 competent, 7–8 strong, 9–10 exceptional.

Anchors should describe performance, not competitor worth.

5.6 Ranked / Placement Competition

Ranked formats ask adjudicators to order competitors rather than assign absolute scores. They are useful when relative comparison is more defensible than pretending small numeric differences are meaningful.

DanceSport finals are a familiar example. Specialized systems such as skating convert individual placements into final results; the scrutineer calculates the aggregate, while judges provide their independent orders.

5.7 Recall / Callback Rounds

Recall rounds answer a narrower question: who should continue? Judges usually select a defined number of entrants rather than rank the entire field.

Organizers should define recall counts, advancement rules, tie-at-cut procedures, and how multiple physical heats are handled.

5.8 Proficiency / Standards-Based Evaluation

Proficiency formats compare the performance to a standard rather than primarily to other competitors. They may use pass/not-yet, meets/exceeds, tiered awards, or minimum criterion thresholds.

A weak field should not make the standard easier. A strong field should not make it harder.

5.9 Head-to-Head / Battle Formats

Battles compare two sides directly. Define seeding, bracket structure, performance order, round length, whether performances alternate or occur simultaneously, how many judges decide, and what happens in a tie.

Possible models include majority decision, score per round, category voting, best-of-three, cumulative points, or sudden-death tiebreaks.

5.10 Audience Scoring

Audience scoring can add energy and community participation, but it introduces structural biases: hometown advantage, larger social followings, vote coordination, seating acoustics, popularity unrelated to criteria, and unequal access to supporters.

If the audience is part of the score, define its weight and voting method clearly. Expert judges should not manipulate their marks to compensate for expected audience behavior.



5.11 Hybrid Models

Hybrid models can combine expert and audience scores, technical and artistic panels, objective measurement and judge scores, or different methods across stages.

The organizer must understand how each component interacts. Avoid counting the same factor twice under different names.

5.12 Dropped Scores and Outlier Handling

Some events drop a high and low judge score to reduce outlier influence. If used, the method must be declared in advance and mathematically applied consistently.

Do not adopt outlier removal merely because one judge produces an inconvenient result. A strong disagreement can be legitimate.

5.13 Panel Size

Larger panels can reduce the influence of one unusual opinion but cost more, require more space, and may be difficult in small disciplines.

Odd-number panels are useful for majority decisions. Rubric systems can use even or odd panels if ties are otherwise resolved.

5.14 Calibration

Before competition, judges should understand the rubric, scoring scale, penalties, tie procedures, and decision model. Calibration may include examples or practice scoring.

Calibration aligns interpretation; it should not be used to tell judges what results to produce.

5.15 Sample Format: Karaoke Duet

Example only: three adjudicators score Pitch/Accuracy 25%, Blend 20%, Timing 15%, Interpretation 20%, Stage Presence 10%, Overall Effect 10%. Scores are averaged. Top six advance from preliminary to final. Final scores do not carry over. Ties are broken first by Blend, then by Overall Effect, then by adjudicator majority preference.

5.16 Sample Format: Sand Sculpture

Example only: five judges score Technical Execution 25%, Structural Difficulty 20%, Creativity 30%, Presentation 15%, Theme Integration 10%. Highest and lowest total judge scores are dropped; remaining totals are averaged. Safety-rule violations are handled as separate penalties.

5.17 Sample Format: Three-Round Battle

Example only: three judges independently choose a winner each round. A competitor who wins two rounds wins the match. If a judge calls a round tied and the system permits ties, the remaining majority may still determine the round. If the match is tied after the defined rounds, one sudden-death round is performed.

5.18 Scoring-System Readiness Checklist

- ☐ Judges know what they are evaluating.



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- ☐ The scoring scale has defined meaning.
- ☐ Weights are mathematically correct.
- ☐ The aggregation method is documented.
- ☐ Advancement is documented.
- ☐ Ties are documented.
- ☐ Penalties are separate from quality scoring where appropriate.
- ☐ Audience influence is explicitly weighted if used.
- ☐ The system can be tested before event day.
- ☐ The scorekeeper/scrutineer can explain the calculation.



PART VI

Selecting and Managing Officials

The quality of a competition depends on both the rules and the people trusted to apply them.

6.1 Build the Official Team

- Competition director / organizer.
- Head adjudicator or chair, where used.
- Adjudicators/judges.
- Scrutineer or scorekeeper.
- Technical/rules official where needed.
- Floor/stage manager.
- Registration lead.
- Safeguarding lead.
- Announcer/emcee.
- Media/technical staff.

6.2 General Adjudication Competence vs Discipline Expertise

OCA General Adjudication Standards training teaches how to judge responsibly across formats. It does not make a person a subject-matter expert in every discipline.

A qualified adjudicator needs both process competence and enough discipline-specific knowledge to understand what the event asks them to evaluate.

The duck problem

Knowing how to judge fairly does not tell you what makes an excellent duck call. The event or discipline community must still establish why a proposed judge knows the subject matter.

6.3 Event-Nominated Adjudicators

Organizers and recognized discipline communities may nominate adjudicators for OCA consideration based on documented experience. The basis of qualification may include competitive history, teaching or coaching experience, professional expertise, prior judging, certification, recognized community standing, technical work, or another relevant basis.

6.4 Selecting a Balanced Panel

Consider expertise, independence, diversity of perspective, geography, community relationships, and conflicts. A panel composed entirely of one studio, employer, club, or social circle may create avoidable credibility problems even if each judge is personally competent.

6.5 Conflicts of Interest

Require disclosure of family, romantic, current coaching, financial, employment, sponsorship, business, close friendship, active dispute, or other relationships that could reasonably affect or appear to affect judgment.



Disclosure does not always require recusal, especially in small competitive communities. Hidden conflicts are more dangerous than disclosed relationships.

6.6 Head Adjudicator / Chair

A head adjudicator can clarify procedure, conduct the panel briefing, address judge availability, coordinate conflicts, interpret rules within their authority, and manage tiebreak procedures where assigned.

The head adjudicator should not pressure an independent panel to converge on a desired result.

6.7 Scrutineer / Scorekeeper Independence

The scrutineer or scorekeeper tabulates what judges submitted. They do not rewrite marks because they disagree with the judges.

Score corrections should follow documented procedures and preserve an audit trail.

6.8 Judge Briefing

- Event purpose and format.
- Division definitions.
- Ballot/scoring method.
- Rubric criteria and anchors.
- Weighting.
- Advancement.
- Tie rules.
- Penalty authority.
- Independent vs deliberative panel behavior.
- Conflict disclosures.
- Safeguarding expectations.
- Score submission and correction rules.
- Schedule and break expectations.

6.9 Who Should Not Judge

Talent alone does not automatically equal judging competence. Fame alone does not equal judging competence. Longevity alone does not equal judging competence.

Do not use a person as a judge merely because they are available, popular, a sponsor, or difficult to say no to.

6.10 Official Agreements and Compensation

Clarify rate, travel, lodging, meals, arrival time, end time, expected attire, duties, cancellation terms, and whether the official may compete in other divisions.

Put important commitments in writing.

6.11 Officials Checklist

- ☐ Every official knows their role.
- ☐ Adjudicators have subject-matter qualification.
- ☐ Conflict disclosures are complete.



OPEN COMPETITION ALLIANCE

- ☐ The head adjudicator is identified if used.
- ☐ The scorekeeper/scrutineer has tested the system.
- ☐ Officials know the rules before event day.
- ☐ Breaks and meals are planned.
- ☐ Compensation/travel expectations are documented.
- ☐ Safeguarding requirements are satisfied.



PART VII

Venue, Infrastructure, and Technical Planning

The event cannot out-organize a venue that fundamentally does not work.

7.1 Venue Selection

- Capacity for competitors and spectators.
- Competition surface or performance area.
- Ceiling height and structural limitations.
- Sound restrictions.
- Power availability.
- Internet availability.
- Loading/unloading.
- Parking and public transit.
- Restrooms.
- Accessibility.
- Changing or preparation spaces.
- Warm-up/on-deck spaces.
- Judge sightlines.
- Emergency exits and responder access.
- Food/beverage rules.
- Insurance requirements.
- Operating hours and overtime fees.
- Cleanup and damage policies.

7.2 Walk the Venue Like an Organizer

Do not evaluate the room only from the audience perspective. Walk the entire competitor journey: arrival, check-in, changing, warm-up, on-deck, competition area, exit, awards, restroom, and departure.

Then walk the judge journey, the scorekeeper journey, the safeguarding pathway, and the emergency pathway.

7.3 Competition Area

Mark boundaries clearly. Ensure adjudicators can see what they are expected to evaluate. Avoid placing judges where lighting, audience traffic, speakers, structural columns, or other competitors block essential information.

If multiple competition areas operate simultaneously, prevent sound or traffic conflicts where possible.

7.4 Registration / Check-In Area

Registration should be visible without blocking the main entrance. Provide enough space for lines, questions, number pickup, payments if allowed, waivers, and problem resolution.

Keep private information off public check-in lists.



7.5 Warm-Up, Staging, and On-Deck

Competitors need to know where to wait and when to move. A clear on-deck system reduces delays and missing entrants.

Do not place youth competitors in unsupervised backstage areas without considering safeguarding.

7.6 Sound and Music

Test the actual playback system, not merely the file. Carry backup cables, adapters, power, and a secondary playback device where feasible.

If competitors submit music, define file format and deadlines. Maintain an organized naming convention.

7.7 Internet and Network

If scoring depends on internet access, test venue connectivity under realistic load. Have an offline or paper contingency when possible.

Do not assume public Wi-Fi will behave like your home network once 300 people arrive.

Wi-Fi is not a plan

If the event collapses because the venue password changed, the system was too fragile.

7.8 Power

Identify outlet locations and circuit limitations. Use safe, rated extension cables and power distribution. Avoid creating trip hazards.

Critical systems should have charged devices and, where practical, battery backup.

7.9 Projection / Public Display

Public displays can show current event, on-deck entries, upcoming rounds, schedule changes, holds, or results. Avoid exposing private competitor data or internal judge information.

7.10 Accessibility

Consider step-free access, door width, accessible restrooms, seating, sightlines, communication needs, service animals, personal aides, sensory considerations, and reasonable time accommodations.

Ask competitors what access they need rather than assuming.

7.11 Restricted and Private Areas

Changing rooms, personal-care areas, judge deliberation areas, scoring stations, staff rooms, and equipment storage may require access control.

Establish who may enter before event day.

7.12 Emergency Planning

Know exits, fire procedures, severe-weather shelter, AED/first-aid resources, emergency contact methods, and who can stop the competition.

For outdoor events, define weather thresholds and evacuation decisions.



7.13 Venue Walkthrough Checklist

- ☐ Main entrance and registration identified.
- ☐ Competition area measured and marked.
- ☐ Judge sightlines tested.
- ☐ Sound tested.
- ☐ Internet tested.
- ☐ Power mapped.
- ☐ Warm-up/on-deck spaces identified.
- ☐ Changing/private areas identified.
- ☐ Accessibility reviewed.
- ☐ Emergency exits reviewed.
- ☐ Public display location identified.
- ☐ Scorekeeping station protected from traffic.
- ☐ Loading/parking plan documented.



PART VIII

Budgeting, Money, Insurance, and Commercial Decisions

A competition can be artistically brilliant and still fail because the math never worked.

8.1 Build the Budget Before Pricing

Estimate costs before deciding entry fees. Organizers often reverse the process: choose a price that feels friendly, then discover the event costs far more than projected revenue.

Use conservative attendance assumptions and include contingency.

8.2 Common Expenses

- Venue rental.
- Insurance.
- Sanctioning fees.
- Adjudicator fees.
- Official travel and lodging.
- Awards and prizes.
- Sound/lighting/AV.
- Rental equipment.
- Dance floor or staging.
- Printing/signage.
- Registration/payment processing.
- Security.
- Medical/first aid.
- Internet or technical services.
- Food/beverage for staff.
- Marketing.
- Photography/video.
- Music or performance licensing where applicable.
- Storage/shipping.
- Taxes and professional fees.
- Contingency.

8.3 Revenue Sources

- Competitor entry fees.
- Spectator admission.
- Workshops or ancillary programming.
- Sponsorship.
- Vendor fees.
- Merchandise.
- Concessions.
- Donations.
- Grants.



- Membership or league fees where appropriate.

8.4 Break-Even Analysis

Calculate how many paid entries or attendees are needed to cover fixed and variable costs. Do not count sponsorship that has not been committed. Do not assume every division will fill.

Illustrative item	Amount
Venue	\$3,000
Officials	\$2,000
AV / equipment	\$800
Awards	\$500
Insurance / permits	\$400
Printing / misc.	\$300
Contingency	\$500
Illustrative total	\$7,500

If average net revenue per entrant is \$50, the event needs approximately 150 entrant-equivalents merely to cover this illustrative cost base before profit.

8.5 Contingency

A contingency line is not evidence that the organizer expects failure. It is evidence that the organizer understands events.

Unexpected overtime, replacement equipment, last-minute travel, medical needs, refunds, weather, printing, or technical support can create real costs.

8.6 Refund and Cancellation Policy

Publish refund terms before collecting money. Address organizer cancellation, competitor withdrawal, weather, venue failure, and transfer to a new date where relevant.

Avoid promising 'no refunds under any circumstances' without considering consumer law and the realities of organizer cancellation.

8.7 Prize Money and Awards

State prize amounts, eligibility, payment timing, tax documentation where applicable, and whether prizes depend on minimum entries.

Do not advertise prize money the event cannot reliably pay.



8.8 Cash Handling

Minimize untracked cash. Use receipts, two-person verification for significant cash counts, and documented handoff procedures.

Do not leave registration cash unattended.

8.9 Insurance and Contracts

Review venue contracts, insurance requirements, indemnity language, cancellation terms, alcohol rules, vendor requirements, and participant waivers with appropriate professional advice where needed.

OCA sanctioning does not replace event insurance.

8.10 Budget Checklist

- ☐ All major fixed costs identified.
- ☐ Variable costs estimated.
- ☐ Conservative revenue assumptions used.
- ☐ Break-even point calculated.
- ☐ Contingency included.
- ☐ Refund policy published.
- ☐ Prize obligations realistic.
- ☐ Insurance requirements reviewed.
- ☐ Payment-processing costs included.
- ☐ Organizer understands tax/accounting obligations may apply.



PART IX

Registration and Competitor Management

Registration is where the event turns from an idea into a dataset that must stay accurate.

9.1 Registration Information to Collect

- Competitor name/public name.
- OCA ID if available.
- Email/contact information.
- Date of birth or age category only when genuinely needed.
- Division entries.
- Partner/team information.
- Emergency contact where appropriate.
- Accessibility requests.
- Parent/guardian information for minors.
- Required consent/waiver acknowledgments.
- Music/material submission where relevant.
- Payment status.

9.2 OCA IDs and Provisional Participants

OCA encourages competitor registration without making bureaucracy a barrier to participation. Where supported, sanctioned events may record provisional entrants and later connect their participation to a permanent OCA ID.

Event records should distinguish identity verification from eligibility verification.

9.3 Privacy

Collect only information the event needs. Restrict access to birth dates, contact details, emergency information, payment records, safeguarding information, and other private data.

Public result sheets do not need to become personal-data directories.

9.4 Registration Deadlines

Set deadlines based on what the organizer must accomplish after registration closes: build brackets, assign heats, verify eligibility, collect music, prepare judge sheets, and publish schedules.

Late registration can be allowed, prohibited, or charged differently, but the policy should be known.

9.5 Waitlists

Waitlists are preferable to silently overloading the event. State how waitlist positions are offered, how long a competitor has to respond, and how payment is handled.

9.6 Entry Changes

Define how competitors add/drop divisions, change partners, substitute team members, or correct information after registration.



Protect the schedule-build cutoff. Unlimited last-minute changes create cascading errors.

9.7 Check-In

Check-in confirms that the person who registered has arrived and that their event-day information is accurate.

Possible check-in outputs include competitor number, wristband, badge, schedule, heat information, music confirmation, or briefing instructions.

9.8 Competitor Numbers

Competitor numbers should be unique within the event and easy for judges and staff to read. Avoid confusing fonts, tiny print, or number schemes that resemble division codes.

If an entrant competes in multiple divisions, decide whether the number follows the person, partnership, or entry.

9.9 Team and Partnership Records

Keep both team-level and individual-member information where OCA results may later attach to each person.

Lock rosters at a defined point unless substitutions are specifically permitted.

9.10 Youth Registration

Collect required parent/guardian consent, safeguarding acknowledgments, supervision information, emergency contact, and age verification only to the degree needed.

Avoid publishing full birth dates.

9.11 Registration QA Checklist

- ☐ No duplicate entries or OCA IDs.
- ☐ Every entry is assigned to the correct division.
- ☐ Payment status is known.
- ☐ Youth consent requirements complete.
- ☐ Music/material submissions complete.
- ☐ Partners/team rosters verified.
- ☐ Accessibility requests reviewed.
- ☐ Late changes reconciled before schedule lock.



PART X

Scheduling and Run-of-Show Design

A schedule is not a list of ideal start times. It is a model of how long real humans and real systems take.

10.1 Work Backward From the Venue Window

Know when you can enter, when competitors can enter, when competition may start, and when the venue must be cleared. Include setup and teardown, not just performance time.

10.2 Calculate Real Performance Time

A three-minute performance is not a three-minute schedule block. Add entrance, setup, judging, exit, reset, score submission, and any announcer transition.

For example, eighteen three-minute performances equal 54 minutes of performance content. If average turnover is 45 seconds, another 13.5 minutes is already gone before judging or delays.

10.3 Build Buffers Intentionally

Buffers are not wasted time. They absorb small delays so the whole event does not become progressively later.

Consider short buffers between sessions and a larger reserve before major finals or awards.

10.4 Judge Breaks

Long judging blocks reduce attention and consistency. Schedule meals, restroom breaks, and rotation where possible.

Do not treat judges as stationary scoring furniture.

10.5 Competitor Conflicts

A participant may enter multiple divisions, serve as an official, perform with multiple partners, or participate on multiple teams. Detect conflicts before publishing the schedule.

OCA competition technology can assist with conflict checks, but organizers should still review multi-entry, official, partnership, and team conflicts before publishing the schedule.

10.6 On-Deck and Upcoming Systems

Tell competitors not only what is currently happening, but what happens next. A strong display system may show Current, On Deck, and two or three upcoming items.

10.7 Schedule Publication

Publish a schedule when it is stable enough to be useful. Mark it as preliminary if changes remain likely. Communicate meaningful changes directly rather than expecting competitors to refresh social media constantly.

10.8 Scheduled Time vs Projected Time

Once the event begins, projected time may be more useful than the printed schedule. If the event is 20 minutes late, tell people the reality.

Public displays can show both scheduled and projected times.

10.9 Multiple Rooms / Areas

Multiple competition spaces can increase capacity but also increase staffing, sound conflicts, competitor conflicts, and communication complexity.

A first-time organizer should not add simultaneous rooms casually.

10.10 Awards Timing

Decide whether awards occur immediately, in blocks, or at the end. Immediate awards can interrupt flow; delayed awards can keep competitors waiting.

Never announce an award until results are verified.

10.11 Sample Run-of-Show Table

Time	Activity	Operational note
7:00	Organizer/staff arrival	Venue access, technical setup
8:00	Registration opens	Judges arrive; scoring system check
8:30	Officials briefing	Rules, conflicts, scoring, safeguarding
9:00	Competition begins	Current/on-deck display active
11:00	Short break	Catch-up buffer if needed
12:30	Lunch block	Results verification / reset
1:30	Competition resumes	Afternoon rounds
5:30	Finals	Hold schedule buffer
7:00	Awards	Verify before announcing
7:45	Public close	Teardown begins



PART XI

Safeguarding, Safety, Accessibility, and Risk

Good competition design protects people before something goes wrong.

11.1 OCA Safeguarding Requirement

If a sanctioned event permits participation by minors, the event must designate at least one Safeguarding Lead who has successfully completed the OCA Safeguarding Youth & Vulnerable Adult Competitors course and assessment before serving in that role.

The full OCA Safeguarding Policy for Sanctioned Events governs the detailed standard; this handbook focuses on event implementation.

11.2 Proportionate Safeguarding

Not every youth-inclusive event presents the same risk. A short public sandcastle contest where parents remain nearby is different from a multi-day dance event involving private coaching, changing rooms, hotels, and organizer-arranged transportation.

Apply stronger safeguards as adult access, privacy, dependency, duration, travel, or authority increase.

11.3 Youth Supervision

State whether parents/guardians retain supervision or whether event staff assume any supervisory responsibility. Ambiguity is dangerous.

11.4 Visible and Interruptible Interaction

Adult-minor interactions should ordinarily occur where they are observable and readily interruptible by another person. Private coaching, feedback, transport, hotel-room meetings, backstage access, and digital communication require special attention.

11.5 Communication

Use official channels where possible. Keep youth communication related to event purposes and transparent to parents/guardians or other responsible adults where appropriate.

Avoid private late-night messaging, disappearing-message platforms, or secrecy requests.

11.6 Photography and Media

Define photography rules. Prohibit recording in changing, restroom, or personal-care areas. If youth opt-out procedures exist, make them operational rather than theoretical.

11.7 Changing and Private Areas

Control access. Provide privacy. Avoid unnecessary adult-minor isolation. Consider gender-inclusive and accessible needs.

A media credential is not a changing-room credential.



11.8 Travel and Lodging

If the organizer arranges travel or lodging, establish supervision, rooming, transportation, emergency contact, and adult-minor interaction rules.

Overnight events move the safeguarding risk profile upward.

11.9 Vulnerable Adults

Respect adult autonomy. Speak directly to the competitor where possible. Consider financial exploitation, coercive caregivers, communication barriers, medical dependency, and personal-care needs.

Safeguarding should protect without infantilizing.

11.10 Medical and Emergency Safety

Know who can call emergency services, where first-aid resources are, how to stop the event, and how to clear access for responders.

Do not allow competitive pressure to delay obvious medical care.

11.11 Outdoor and Weather Risk

Define heat, lightning, wind, cold, air-quality, or other thresholds where relevant. Know who has authority to pause or cancel.

11.12 Accessibility as Operations

Accessibility is not a paragraph on the website. It includes route planning, seating, restroom access, timing, communication, interpreters, support persons, service animals, sensory needs, and reasonable adjustments to process.

Ask what the competitor needs.

11.13 Incident Reporting

Create a way to report safety, safeguarding, harassment, or operational incidents. Document facts, immediate actions, and notifications.

Internal OCA reporting does not replace legally required reports.

11.14 Risk Review Checklist

- ☐ Minors eligible? Safeguarding requirements assigned.
- ☐ Vulnerable-adult considerations reviewed.
- ☐ Emergency exits and medical response known.
- ☐ Weather plan exists if relevant.
- ☐ Changing/private areas controlled.
- ☐ Photography rules set.
- ☐ Transportation/lodging rules set if applicable.
- ☐ Accessibility requests reviewed.
- ☐ Incident-report process available.



☐ Person with authority to pause/stop competition identified.



PART XII

Inclusion, Culture, and the OCA Event Experience

The event should feel like a place people want to belong, not merely a machine that produces placements.

12.1 Inclusion Is Event Design

A statement that 'everyone is welcome' matters only if the rules, registration, venue, staffing, and culture make participation realistically possible.

Review partnership definitions, gender assumptions, disability access, newcomer information, dress expectations, language, cost barriers, and support-person policies.

12.2 Gender and Competitive Roles

Where a competition needs functional roles such as Leader and Follower, use those roles rather than automatically equating them with man and woman. If sex or gender categories are genuinely relevant to the discipline, define them deliberately and review applicable law.

12.3 Newcomers

First-time competitors often do not know what experienced competitors consider obvious. Publish check-in expectations, where to stand, what happens after a performance, how results are posted, what to wear, and whom to ask for help.

A newcomer-friendly event grows its future field.

12.4 Respect Names, Pronouns, and Public Identity

Use competitors' public names accurately. Train announcers. Correct mistakes without drama.

Do not force disclosure of private legal information beyond what the event actually needs.

12.5 Disability and Adaptive Participation

Avoid assuming what a participant can or cannot do. Make reasonable process adjustments where they do not destroy the competitive purpose.

If a specific accommodation affects judging, define how the event will handle it transparently.

12.6 Tradition Without Gatekeeping

OCA respects historical forms, technical traditions, community customs, and discipline lineage. Tradition becomes a problem when it is treated as an unquestionable reason to exclude people or resist administratively sound change.

12.7 Create Energy

A successful event is not only accurate. It has rhythm. Competitors know what is happening. The emcee understands the tone. Music and transitions support the room. Awards feel meaningful. Delays are communicated. Spectators know when to engage.

Energy does not require chaos.



12.8 Serious Standards, Fun Atmosphere

Professionalism is not stiffness. Humor, color, unusual formats, costumes, audience participation, and personality can coexist with excellent scoring and safeguarding.

OCA should feel recognizably OCA: curious, modern, inclusive, and game for something new.

Fair Play. Wild Ideas.

The event can be weird. The math cannot be weird unless the rules intentionally say so.

12.9 Emcee / Announcer

The emcee is a major cultural role. Provide names and pronunciations, sponsor acknowledgments, timing cues, prohibited jokes/topics where appropriate, and instructions not to improvise competitive rules from the microphone.

The emcee should never announce unverified results.



PART XIII

Marketing and Communication

People cannot enter a competition they do not understand, and they cannot prepare for rules they cannot find.

13.1 Event Identity

Create a clear name, date, location, and one-sentence description. Avoid branding that obscures what the event actually is.

If OCA-sanctioned, use approved language consistently.

13.2 The Essential Public Information Page

- Event date and location.
- Registration link.
- Entry deadlines.
- Eligibility.
- Divisions.
- Rules.
- Pricing.
- Refund policy.
- Schedule or schedule-release date.
- Venue/accessibility information.
- Contact.
- Safeguarding/youth information where relevant.

Do not make competitors hunt through seven Instagram posts to find the rules.

Social media is promotion. Your event website or official information page is the reference source.

13.3 Registration Launch

Do not open registration before the organizer can answer the questions competitors need to make an informed decision.

If rules are provisional, say so clearly and identify what may still change.

13.4 Email Communication

Send confirmation, major updates, schedule release, venue details, and urgent changes directly. Use consistent subject lines and avoid flooding competitors with messages that hide the important ones.

13.5 Social Media

Use social media to build excitement, introduce judges, highlight disciplines, explain unusual formats, and share deadlines. Do not use social media comments as the primary appeals process.



13.6 Sponsors and Vendors

Define benefits, branding placement, booth needs, payment, electrical needs, load-in, insurance, and conduct expectations.

Sponsorship should not silently influence judging or official selection.

13.7 Media and Photography

Publish media expectations. Identify official photographers. Explain opt-out or restricted-area practices where applicable.

Protect youth and private spaces.

13.8 Crisis Communication

When something important changes, communicate facts quickly: what happened, what changes, what competitors should do, and where updates will appear.

Avoid speculative public statements during safeguarding, medical, legal, or scoring investigations.



PART XIV

Event-Day Operations

The field guide: what to do from the moment the organizer gets the keys until the last result is secured.

14.1 The Night Before

Freeze what can be frozen. Export/backup registration. Confirm officials. Charge devices. Print emergency materials. Verify music. Pack adapters, cables, chargers, tape, markers, extension cords, first-aid basics, signage, and backup ballots.

Do not redesign the competition at midnight unless a real problem requires it.

14.2 Organizer Event-Day Kit

- ☐ Laptop(s) and chargers.
- ☐ Tablet/phone chargers and power banks.
- ☐ Extension cords/power strips.
- ☐ Backup internet/hotspot where lawful and useful.
- ☐ Printer/paper/ink if needed.
- ☐ Paper ballots / backup scoring sheets.
- ☐ Pens, markers, tape, clips, scissors.
- ☐ Competitor-number supplies.
- ☐ Registration lists.
- ☐ Rules and official briefing notes.
- ☐ Venue contact information.
- ☐ Emergency contacts.
- ☐ Incident forms.
- ☐ First-aid location information.
- ☐ Music backups.
- ☐ Adapters/cables.
- ☐ Awards list and verification sheet.

14.3 Venue Arrival

Walk the venue immediately. Confirm nothing has changed: room layout, locked doors, missing tables, power, sound, internet, temperature, construction, signage, or another event occupying space you expected to use.

Solve infrastructure problems before competitors arrive.

14.4 Staff Check-In

Every staff member should know where to report, their role, who supervises them, where to get help, and when their shift ends.

Provide a short staff communication channel that does not expose competitor private data.



14.5 Officials Check-In and Briefing

Confirm attendance, conflicts, assignments, scoring access, schedule, breaks, penalties, tie rules, and safeguarding expectations.

Do a real scoring-system test before the first live ballot.

14.6 Registration Opens

Separate simple check-in from problem resolution if volume is high. One person can keep the line moving while another handles missing payments, wrong divisions, partnership changes, or OCA-ID issues.

Record changes immediately; do not rely on sticky notes that never reach the scoring system.

14.7 Opening the Competition

The opening should establish expectations without becoming a forty-minute ceremony. Announce key safety information, where results will appear, how on-deck works, and any essential rules.

Start on time if possible. Early operational credibility matters.

14.8 Running the Floor / Stage

The floor or stage manager owns movement. They should know who is current, on deck, and upcoming; whether the judges are ready; whether music/technical staff are ready; and whether a hold exists.

Avoid five different staff members giving competitors conflicting instructions.

14.9 Calls and Missing Competitors

Use a defined call procedure: first call, final call, then apply the published late/no-show rule.

Do not hold the entire event indefinitely for one missing competitor unless rules or safety justify it.

14.10 Score Collection

Monitor ballot completion without influencing content. If a judge misses a category, ask them to complete it; do not guess their score.

If technology fails, transition to the backup process deliberately.

14.11 Live Corrections

When a clerical issue occurs, document what changed and why. Do not let people edit submitted marks casually because they dislike the aggregate.

14.12 Schedule Slippage

If behind, identify the actual source: slow turnover, judge delays, registration problems, equipment, too-long breaks, excessive announcements, or unrealistic original estimates.

Fix the cause, not merely the clock.



14.13 Communicating Delays

Tell people the projected reality. If lunch shifts by 30 minutes, say so. If a final moves rooms, communicate directly.

Silence makes a 20-minute delay feel like incompetence; clear communication makes it manageable.

14.14 Holds

A hold pauses advancement for a reason: safety, technical issue, rules question, missing official, or verified competitor issue. Use holds sparingly and show them publicly where appropriate so the audience understands the pause.

14.15 Breaks

Protect planned breaks unless the event truly cannot. Judges and staff make worse decisions when basic needs are treated as optional.

If behind schedule, consider shortening nonessential ceremony before eliminating every official break.

14.16 Awards Preparation

Prepare award order while competition continues, but never finalize names or placements until results are verified.

Check spelling and pronunciation.

14.17 Closing the Event

Do not let teardown erase records. Secure results, incident forms, equipment, payments, and lost-and-found information before staff disperse.

Confirm venue obligations and damage checks.



PART XV

When Things Go Wrong

Every real event eventually becomes a test of the organizer's ability to solve problems without making a second problem.

15.1 General Incident Principles

- Protect immediate safety first.
- Identify who has authority.
- Preserve evidence and records.
- Apply the published rule if one exists.
- Communicate clearly to affected people.
- Do not invent consequential rules merely to make the problem disappear.
- Document significant corrections or exceptions.

15.2 A Judge Does Not Arrive

Determine whether the panel can legally/operationally continue at reduced size under the rules. Contact the backup judge if one exists. Consider delaying only the affected division rather than the whole event.

Document any change in panel composition.

15.3 A Competitor Does Not Arrive

Apply the call and late/no-show rule. If the competitor has a verified emergency and the rules permit flexibility, use the defined process rather than private favoritism.

15.4 Too Many Entrants

Do not simply cram everyone into a judging structure that cannot fairly handle them. Add heats, rounds, qualification groups, or schedule time if the rules permit.

If format changes materially, communicate them before judging begins.

15.5 Too Few Entrants

Decide in advance whether divisions combine, run uncontested, convert to proficiency, or cancel. Competitors should know what happens to entry fees and registry points.

15.6 Computer or Scoring Failure

Stop the scoring workflow before data becomes ambiguous. Preserve submitted ballots. Move to paper or backup devices if the event can do so cleanly.

Do not continue collecting unverifiable scores in multiple unofficial places.

15.7 Internet Failure

Use offline/local capability if available. If not, activate paper backup. Public display may fail without compromising judging if the scoring system itself remains functional.



15.8 Sound Failure

Pause if the performance depends on sound. Do not judge a competitor on an organizer-created technical failure.

Define restart rules for performances interrupted by event equipment.

15.9 Power Failure

Prioritize safety, venue instruction, emergency lighting, and preservation of data. Know whether the building must evacuate.

15.10 Judge Submits Wrong Ballot

If the judge clearly scored the wrong competitor or omitted information, follow the correction procedure. Document the change.

Do not allow a judge to rewrite a valid judgment after seeing the results.

15.11 Result Announced Incorrectly

Correct the record quickly and directly. Apologize without inventing excuses. Retrieve or reassign awards as respectfully as possible.

The official result must match the verified calculation even when correction is embarrassing.

15.12 Competitor Protest

Listen, identify the claimed issue, determine whether it is reviewable, and route it through the published protest process.

Do not argue in the hallway.

15.13 Angry Parent / Spectator

Move the conversation away from the competition area when possible. Maintain boundaries. Use security or venue staff if behavior becomes threatening.

A loud complaint does not gain extra procedural rights.

15.14 Medical Emergency

Stop or redirect activity to create access for responders. Contact emergency services when warranted. Preserve privacy.

Competition resumes only when safe.

15.15 Safeguarding Disclosure

Protect, listen, document, and report. Do not conduct an amateur investigation or force confrontation.

Use the OCA Safeguarding framework and applicable external reporting law.



15.16 Severe Weather

Follow venue and emergency authority. Outdoor events should have predetermined thresholds and shelter/evacuation plans.

Do not keep a contest running because the schedule is inconvenient to change.

15.17 The Schedule Is 90 Minutes Late

Diagnose the cause. Remove nonessential dead time, tighten transitions, communicate projected times, protect safety and judging quality, and consider moving or reducing noncompetitive extras.

Do not solve lateness by silently cutting competitors' promised performance time unless rules allow it and affected competitors are informed.

15.18 Public Controversy During the Event

Do not live-blog an unresolved dispute. Identify one authorized spokesperson if a response is needed. State verified facts and process, not speculation.

Protect safeguarding and personnel confidentiality.

15.19 Organizer Error

Own it. Correct what can be corrected, document the remedy, and avoid blaming volunteers or competitors publicly.

A transparent correction often protects credibility better than defensive denial.



PART XVI

Results, Awards, Records, and OCA Reporting

The event is not finished when the final performance ends; it is finished when the result is verified and the record is secure.

16.1 Verify Before Announcing

The scorekeeper/scrutineer should confirm that all required ballots are present, calculations complete, penalties applied correctly, ties resolved, and any known corrections documented.

For high-stakes finals, use a second-person verification where practical.

16.2 Result Certification

Define who certifies official results: scrutineer, head adjudicator, competition director, or a combination.

Certification means the administrative process is complete, not that every participant agrees with every judge.

16.3 Public Results

Publish enough information to establish placements and transparency without exposing unnecessary personal data.

If detailed score breakdowns are published, ensure judges and competitors were told that in advance.

16.4 Corrections After Publication

If a real error is discovered, correct the official record. Preserve an audit trail and publish a clear correction when the public result changed.

Do not leave a known false result online because changing it is awkward.

16.5 Awards

Match awards to verified results. Have a plan for absent winners, shared placements, team awards, prize money, certificates, and sponsor prizes.

Do not award a prize before resolving a known scoring issue.

16.6 OCA Participation Reporting

Sanctioned events may be required to report OCA IDs or provisional participant records for people who participated, even when they did not place or earn registry points.

Participation can become part of the Open Circuit history.

16.7 OCA Result Reporting

- OCA Event ID.
- Competitor OCA ID or provisional identity.
- Discipline.



- Division.
- Placement/result label.
- Registry points if any.
- Official status such as DNS/DQ/withdrawal where needed.

16.8 Registry Points

If an event awards OCA registry points, use the published registry rules. Points should be recorded as transactions tied to the event and result rather than manually rewriting a lifetime total.

16.9 Record Retention

Retain official results, correction records, key ballots or exports, incident documentation, sanction records, and other materials according to OCA policy and applicable law.

Do not retain unnecessary sensitive data forever merely because storage is cheap.

16.10 Data Export and Backup

After the event, export a stable copy of results and participant records. A cloud interface is not a substitute for an archival export.



PART XVII

After the Event

Close the loop while memory is still fresh.

17.1 Financial Closeout

Pay officials, settle venue and vendor balances, reconcile payments, record refunds, deposit cash, and preserve receipts.

Compare actual revenue and expense against budget.

17.2 Thank People

Officials, volunteers, venue staff, sponsors, vendors, competitors, and community partners are more likely to return when their contribution is acknowledged.

Thank-you communication should not replace payment where payment was promised.

17.3 OCA Reporting

Submit required participation, results, registry points, event completion information, and incident reports within the required timeline.

Mark the event complete only after reporting obligations are met.

17.4 Competitor Feedback

A short survey can identify issues organizers did not see from backstage. Ask about registration, schedule, venue, judging clarity, communication, accessibility, atmosphere, and whether the competitor would return.

Do not ask only 'Did you have fun?'

17.5 Staff and Official Debrief

Hold a debrief while people still remember specifics. Focus on systems rather than blame.

Capture what should change in rules, schedule estimates, staffing, venue setup, technology, and communication.

17.6 The Event Postmortem

- What worked exceptionally well?
- What ran late and why?
- What confused competitors?
- Which rules produced questions?
- Which staff role was understaffed?
- Which technical system was fragile?
- What complaint was legitimate?
- What did participants love?
- What did we spend that we did not need?
- What should we spend more on next time?



- What should never happen again?
- What should become a tradition?

17.7 Rule Revision

Do not wait eleven months to remember which rule caused the problem. Update the working rulebook after the debrief and document the reason for major changes.

17.8 Incident Follow-Up

Safeguarding, injury, conduct, insurance, or legal issues may continue after the event. Maintain appropriate documentation and confidentiality.

Do not consider the matter closed merely because the venue is empty.

17.9 Start the Next Event File

If the event will recur, create the next-year planning file immediately with notes, vendor contacts, schedule assumptions, budget actuals, and lessons learned.

Future-you is part of the organizing team. Leave them useful records.



PART XVIII

Building an Event People Want to Return To

Successful competition is not only a result. It is a community experience worth repeating.

18.1 Run the Event You Would Want to Enter

Imagine the event from the competitor's side. Was registration clear? Did they know where to go? Did the schedule respect their time? Did officials appear competent? Were results trustworthy? Did the event feel welcoming? Was the atmosphere worth the effort and cost of attending?

Technical accuracy is essential, but participant experience determines whether the field grows.

18.2 Build Traditions Deliberately

Traditions can create identity: a signature award, annual challenge, opening ritual, community dinner, unusual trophy, themed final, or recurring battle.

Keep traditions because people love them, not because nobody remembers why they exist.

18.3 Develop Officials

Invite promising community members to train, shadow, scorekeep, or serve in low-risk roles. A sustainable event should not depend permanently on the same two exhausted experts.

18.4 Develop Organizers

Give volunteers meaningful responsibility and documentation. Build systems that another person could understand.

An event that can only exist while one founder remembers every detail is fragile.

18.5 Contribute to the OCA Knowledge Base

Share rule sets, scoring innovations, adjudicator qualification practices, and operational lessons with OCA. A clever solution from a small local contest may help another organizer hundreds of miles away.

18.6 Experiment With Format, Not Fairness

OCA welcomes pilot divisions, new battle structures, hybrid scoring, audience participation, novelty formats, and competitions that do not fit old categories.

Experimental does not mean undisclosed. Publish the method, test the math, explain the rules, and be willing to revise after the pilot.

18.7 The Open Circuit

The broader OCA ecosystem can encourage participants to try different sanctioned events across a year. A person might swing dance in January, build sandcastles in May, enter karaoke in August, and compete in gingerbread construction in December.

That breadth is part of the culture. OCA can recognize both excellence and willingness to participate.



Who's game?

The Alliance is built to make people curious about their next competition, not merely anxious about defending their last result.

18.8 A Final Organizer Standard

A successful OCA organizer does not need to produce a giant championship. They need to produce the event they promised: safe enough for the risk, clear enough to understand, fair enough to trust, organized enough to finish, and alive enough that people want to come back.

APPENDICES

Organizer Tools, Templates, and Checklists

The following tools are designed to be copied, adapted, or converted into OCA web forms and organizer worksheets.

Appendix A — First-Time Organizer Roadmap

Stage	Primary work
1. Concept	Define purpose, discipline, participant, competition family, field size.
2. Feasibility	Venue, budget, insurance, staffing, date.
3. Draft Rules	Eligibility, divisions, scoring, advancement, ties, penalties, appeals.
4. OCA Sanction	Submit organizer/event information and required documents.
5. Build Operations	Registration, officials, safeguarding, schedule, technology.
6. Publish	Rules, registration, deadlines, venue, communication.
7. Finalize	Close registration, build rounds, confirm officials, test scoring.
8. Run	Check-in, brief, stage, score, communicate, verify.
9. Report	Publish results, submit OCA records, settle points.
10. Debrief	Financial closeout, survey, postmortem, revisions.

Appendix B — Planning Timelines

12–9 Months Out

- ☐ Define concept and target community.
- ☐ Research date conflicts.
- ☐ Estimate budget.
- ☐ Identify venue options.
- ☐ Draft initial rules.
- ☐ Identify key officials.
- ☐ Begin sanction discussion/application.



6 Months Out

- ☐ Venue contracted.
- ☐ Insurance plan reviewed.
- ☐ Rules substantially complete.
- ☐ Sanction application approved or in final review.
- ☐ Registration system built.
- ☐ Judges/head official invited.
- ☐ Branding/public event page prepared.

90 Days Out

- ☐ Registration open.
- ☐ Public rules posted.
- ☐ Safeguarding requirements assigned.
- ☐ Vendor/sponsor plan active.
- ☐ Technical needs confirmed.
- ☐ Awards ordered if custom.
- ☐ Staff recruitment underway.

30 Days Out

- ☐ Review entries and likely schedule.
- ☐ Confirm all officials.
- ☐ Confirm venue layout.
- ☐ Collect music/material requirements.
- ☐ Review accessibility requests.
- ☐ Prepare judge briefing.
- ☐ Test scoring configuration.

7 Days Out

- ☐ Close or freeze registration as planned.
- ☐ Finalize rounds/heats/brackets.
- ☐ Publish schedule.
- ☐ Send competitor logistics email.
- ☐ Send officials package.
- ☐ Print/prepare backup materials.
- ☐ Charge/test equipment.

24 Hours Out

- ☐ Backup registration and results database.
- ☐ Confirm venue access.
- ☐ Confirm judge travel.



- ☐ Pack organizer kit.
- ☐ Verify awards.
- ☐ Verify music.
- ☐ Review emergency contacts.
- ☐ Sleep if humanly possible.

Appendix C — Competition Concept Worksheet

Event working name:

Purpose of the competition:

Discipline(s):

Who is eligible:

Competitive unit (individual/pair/team/object):

Expected field size:

What does winning mean:

Competition family:

Proposed stages:

Scoring method:

Tie method:

Youth participation:

Venue concept:

Budget target:

Key officials needed:



Appendix D — Generic OCA Competition Rules Template

Section	What to include
1. Event and Division Name	Identify the event, division, and sanction reference.
2. Purpose	State what the competition is intended to determine.
3. Eligibility	Who may enter; age/experience/residency/professional status where relevant.
4. Entry Composition	Individual, pair, team; roster/substitution rules.
5. Registration	Deadlines, fees, late entry, refunds.
6. Competition Stages	Prelim/quarter/semi/final/bracket/proficiency structure.
7. Performance Requirements	Time, materials, music, required content, setup.
8. Prohibited Conduct/Elements	Technical, safety, content, or material restrictions.
9. Adjudication Criteria	Rubric/categories or ranking instructions.
10. Scoring	Scale, weights, aggregation, dropped scores, audience component.
11. Advancement	How many advance and how cuts are handled.
12. Ties	Published tiebreak.
13. Penalties	Violation and deduction rules.
14. Disqualification	Grounds and authority.
15. Late/DNS/Withdrawal	No-show and withdrawal handling.
16. Appeals/Protests	Reviewable issues, deadline, authority.
17. Results	Publication and correction.
18. Organizer Authority	Emergency changes and final administrative authority.
19. Safeguarding/Conduct	Applicable youth/vulnerable-adult and conduct rules.

Appendix E — Rubric Design Worksheet

Criterion	Definition	Weight	Scale/anchors
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- ☐ Each criterion serves the competition purpose.
- ☐ Criteria do not substantially duplicate one another.
- ☐ Weights total 100% or otherwise combine correctly.
- ☐ Judges can observe each criterion.
- ☐ Scale anchors are defined.
- ☐ Required-rule penalties are not hidden inside quality scores.

Appendix F — Head-to-Head / Battle Format Worksheet

Competitor format: _____

Bracket type: _____

Seeding method: _____

Rounds per match: _____

Performance order: _____

Round duration: _____

Alternating or simultaneous: _____

Number of judges: _____

Decision method: _____

Can judges call a tie: _____

Tie/sudden-death procedure: _____

Do prior-round scores carry: _____

Audience role: _____

Appendix G — Judge Briefing Agenda

- ☐ Welcome / introductions.
- ☐ Confirm conflicts.
- ☐ Review division definitions.
- ☐ Review competition stages.
- ☐ Review criteria.
- ☐ Review scoring scale and weights.



- ☐ Review advancement.
- ☐ Review tie procedure.
- ☐ Review penalties and who applies them.
- ☐ Confirm independent vs deliberative judging.
- ☐ Demonstrate scoring tool.
- ☐ Explain score-correction process.
- ☐ Review safeguarding boundaries.
- ☐ Review schedule and breaks.
- ☐ Questions before first round.

Appendix H — Event-Day Master Checklist

Venue

- ☐ Access open
- ☐ Competition area ready
- ☐ Registration ready
- ☐ Sound ready
- ☐ Internet/power ready
- ☐ Emergency exits clear

People

- ☐ Organizer present
- ☐ Officials checked in
- ☐ Safeguarding lead present
- ☐ Staff assigned
- ☐ Venue contact known

Competition

- ☐ Rules available
- ☐ Scoring tested
- ☐ Backup ballots ready
- ☐ Schedule loaded
- ☐ On-deck process ready

Competitors

- ☐ Check-in active
- ☐ Numbers/materials ready
- ☐ Youth requirements verified
- ☐ Accessibility accommodations ready



Results

- ☐ Verification procedure known
- ☐ Awards matched
- ☐ Publication method ready
- ☐ OCA reporting fields captured

Appendix I — Safeguarding and Risk Checklist

- ☐ Does the event permit minors?
- ☐ Who is responsible for supervision?
- ☐ Is required OCA safeguarding training current?
- ☐ Where could one-to-one adult/minor contact occur?
- ☐ Are there changing/private areas?
- ☐ Does the event arrange transportation?
- ☐ Does the event involve lodging?
- ☐ What photography/media access exists?
- ☐ Are vulnerable adults likely to need support?
- ☐ Are emergency/medical resources known?
- ☐ Are accessibility requests captured?
- ☐ How does someone report a concern?

Appendix J — Incident Documentation Prompt

Date/time:

Location:

People present:

What was observed directly:

What was reported and by whom:

Immediate safety action:

Who was notified:

External report made (if applicable):

Follow-up required:



Recorder name/role:

Appendix K — Results Certification Checklist

- ☐ All required ballots submitted.
- ☐ Wrong/missing competitor numbers resolved.
- ☐ Weights/calculations verified.
- ☐ Penalties applied according to rules.
- ☐ Ties resolved according to published method.
- ☐ Corrections documented.
- ☐ Final placements verified.
- ☐ Awards matched to final placements.
- ☐ Results exported/backed up.
- ☐ OCA participation/result data ready.

Appendix L — Post-Event Debrief Worksheet

What worked exceptionally well?

What ran late, and what caused it?

Which rule generated the most questions?

Which staffing role was overloaded?

What technology failed or nearly failed?

What did competitors praise?

What complaint was most legitimate?

What accessibility or safeguarding lesson emerged?

What budget assumption was wrong?

What should become a tradition?

What should never happen again?

Three changes for next year:

Appendix M — Glossary of Competition Terms

Term	Meaning
Adjudicator	An official who evaluates competitive performance or entries.
Advancement	Movement from one competition stage to the next.
Battle	A head-to-head contest in which two competitors/sides are directly compared.
Calibration	Pre-event work to align understanding of criteria and scales without forcing identical scores.
Credential	An OCA-recognized status or qualification held by an individual.
Disqualification (DQ)	Removal from competitive result for a defined rule, eligibility, safety, or conduct reason.
Division	A defined group/category within an event.
DNS	Did not start; registered or expected but did not begin the relevant competition.
Event ID	The permanent OCA identifier assigned to a sanctioned event.
Head Adjudicator	Lead judging official responsible for panel procedure within defined authority.
OCA ID	Permanent identity number assigned to an OCA individual.

Proficiency	Evaluation against a defined standard rather than primarily against other competitors.
Recall	A judge's selection of a competitor to advance from a qualifying round.
Registry	An OCA points/ranking system tied to defined events or disciplines.
Rubric	A set of defined evaluation criteria and scoring rules.
Sanctioning	OCA recognition of an event that agrees to applicable Alliance standards.
Scrutineer	Official who tabulates and certifies competitive results in systems requiring specialized calculation.
Scorekeeper	Official who records/calculates scores in a competition.
Tie	Equal result under the event's primary scoring method.
Withdrawal	A competitor voluntarily leaves the event or division after entry.

Appendix N — Organizer Quick Reference Sheet

Question	Where to look / who decides
Can this person enter?	Eligibility rules / Registration Lead
What happens if they are late?	Late/DNS rule
What should this violation cost?	Penalty rule / Head Adjudicator or Technical Official
Who advances?	Advancement rule / Scrutineer result
How is a tie broken?	Published tiebreak
Can a judge change a submitted score?	Score-correction procedure
Is this protest reviewable?	Appeal/protest rule
Can we keep running during a safety problem?	Organizer / Venue / Emergency authority
Who handles safeguarding concern?	Safeguarding Lead + applicable authorities
Can we improvise a new rule?	Only under narrow emergency authority; document and communicate





A Closing Note to OCA Organizers

Competition is a strange and wonderful human habit. We take music, movement, jokes, structures, calls, performances, crafts, traditions, skills, and occasionally objects made of sugar or sand, then decide to build rules around them and see what happens. OCA exists because that impulse deserves better infrastructure without losing its personality.

Your event does not need to imitate ballroom, athletics, esports, fairs, pageants, or any other existing model merely to feel legitimate. It needs to know what it is, tell competitors the truth about how it works, select people who can judge it, protect participants, calculate results correctly, and operate with enough care that people want another one.

Run the event you would want to enter.

Make the rules clear. Make the room welcoming. Make the judging credible. Make the result trustworthy. Then leave enough room for the wild idea that made you want to organize it in the first place.

OPEN COMPETITION ALLIANCE

Competition, Wide Open.