



The Investigation Plan Template

1. What is being investigated?
2. What is the overall approach to gathering the evidence?
3. What and where is the evidence?
4. What problems might arise during the investigation?
5. What resources will be required?
6. How are internal and external communications going to be managed?
7. What are the milestones and timelines?
8. When will the investigation be completed?

1. What is being investigated?

The first step is to set out as precisely as possible **exactly** what it is that is being investigated. It may be a specific allegation or series of allegations. It may be a number of interrelated issues or allegations. It is usually wise to keep the issue(s) as narrow and focused as possible.

2. What is the overall approach to gathering the evidence?

Prepare a brief outline setting out the overall approach to conducting the investigation. What is the strategy? Draw a 'big picture' of how it is anticipated the investigation will unfold. What investigative steps will be taken, and in what order?

Decide, for example, if witness interviews should wait until documents have been collected and reviewed. When, if at all, should investigators go to any scene that relates to the investigation? Should witnesses be interviewed in a certain order, if at all possible?

3. What and where is the evidence?

Identify who should be spoken to and what documentary, physical and digital evidence have to be gathered. The following categories may be helpful as the investigator goes through that process

- **Laws and standards**

Investigators need to know the legal, regulatory and ethical standards that apply to whatever is under scrutiny. Knowing them gives both context and a baseline for the investigation.



- **Witnesses**

List the people who the investigator(s) will likely want to speak to during the investigation, including a one-line reason as to why and also where those individuals are physically located. If possible the method to be used to conduct the interviews should be set out – in person, by phone or by some other means. Explain the rationale behind any preferred order of interviews. Will you likely be using expert evidence? If so, who?

- **Documents**

What documents may be relevant to the investigation? Who has them? Where are they? How many of them are there likely to be? How can they be obtained as quickly as possible? What will have to be done to make sure they are thoroughly reviewed, once they have been obtained?

- **Physical and digital evidence**

If physical evidence is a consideration, it will be necessary to work out where it is, how it is going to be secured, whether a chain of custody needs to be established, and whether expert assistance will be needed to preserve and examine it.

Ask the same questions if you will possibly gather digital evidence. For example, is it likely that there is evidence on You Tube? If so, how can it be found? Might there be mobile phone video that has yet to be uploaded anywhere? Is there CCTV at the place where an incident occurred? Is there something on a hard drive that might be important?

4. What problems might arise during the investigation?

Investigators should attempt to identify possible special considerations that, based on knowledge of the case or past experience, may arise during the investigation. Possible solutions should be considered for tackling them – or getting around them - should they arise.

Typical challenges or issues that might include:

- Lack of cooperation
- Fear of reprisal
- Collusion between witnesses
- Culture / language / capacity
- Access to sources of evidence



- Potential destruction of or tampering with evidence
- Need to use any investigative powers you have at your disposal, such as a power of entry or a power to subpoena

5. What resources will be needed?

How many people will be needed to conduct the investigation within a reasonable time? What technical or other support will be necessary? How much is the investigation likely to cost?

Consider, and predict to the extent that is possible:

- The number of investigators and support staff required;
- Research;
- Forensic and other experts;
- Outside legal advice;
- Travel and related costs;
- Translation;
- Transcription

6. How are internal and external communications going to be managed?

If relevant, plan how to:

- Announce an investigation;
- Manage any information that comes in;
- Keep those interested updated on the progress of the investigation, without impacting the integrity of the investigation itself;
- Make sure anyone who should be ‘in the loop’, actually is.



7. What are the milestones and timelines?

As the plan is developed, set out **realistic** targets and goals for completing various stages of the investigation. Factor in how much actual control you have over the pace of the investigation.

Estimate when you will likely receive documents, how long it will take to review them, at what point witnesses will have been located and interviewed and so on.

8. When will the investigation be completed?

Come up with a rough estimate when the investigation will be completed. Factor in:

- The complexity of the issue(s);
- How much background research has to be done;
- How much evidence is there to be collected, including number of potential witnesses and amount of documentation, physical and digital evidence;
- How any impediments identified in section 4 of the template will factor into the equation;
- How long it will take to analyze all the evidence;
- How long will it take to write a report.

For more details, see Chapter 4 and 5 of *Undertaking Effective Investigations*, which can be downloaded at no charge at www.investigationstraining.com