



FIFA World Cup Operations and Planning

This case study is for the purposes of education only and does not suggest any good or bad practice on the part of anyone mentioned in the case study.

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ABSTRACT

Over the history of the FIFA World Cup tournament, the competition has developed and changed in various ways as it has grown to the global football tournament we see today.

Each tournament has some common elements, and each tournament also poses distinctive challenges and opportunities. This case study highlights some of the milestones in the history of the tournament and also some of the characteristics of recent hosts Russia, as well as future hosts Qatar and Canada, USA and Mexico to help students to consider what planning and operational issues should be accounted for in each different context.

FIFA WORLD CUP™ OPERATIONS AND PLANNING CASE STUDY

By June 2018, in the run up to the 2018 FIFA World Cup™ Russia, planning for the 2022 FIFA World Cup™ Qatar was well on track. The eight football stadia were progressing well, the light railway was well underway and the road infrastructure, hotels and other facilities were well advanced.

Many of those involved in planning and preparation for the event had recently returned from the 2018 FIFA World Cup™ Russia and were sharing and discussing their learning from this event. To what extent though, would the learning from Russia be transferable to a tournament in Qatar, given the different geography of the two countries?

It was clear that, over the history of the competition, some core elements of the tournament organization and ethos had remained core, and others had evolved. Indeed, FIFA had recently announced that the 2026 FIFA World Cup™ would be hosted jointly by US, Canada and Mexico¹ and would be expanded to a new 48 team format from the current 32

1. "Canada, Mexico and USA selected as hosts of the 2026 FIFA World Cup™," *Press release*, FIFA (website), 13 June 2018, <https://www.fifa.com/about-fifa/news/y=2018/m=6/news=canada-mexico-and-usa-selected-as-hosts-of-the-2026-fifa-world-cuptm.html>.

team format, which had been used at the recent 2018 FIFA World Cup™ Russia and was also proposed for the 2022 FIFA World Cup™ Qatar.

The FIFA World Cup Tournament

First contested in 1930, 88 years ago, the *Fédération Internationale de Football Association* (FIFA) World Cup allows the world's top national football teams, now 32 teams of the 211 Football Associations/Federations who are eligible to enter the competition, to play in a show case tournament over a period of around one month.

The tournament has been played every four years with the exception of 1942 and 1946 when it was not played because of the World War.

The current format includes a qualifying tournament which is played by eligible football national teams over the three-year period preceding the tournament. After this, 32 teams, including the automatically qualified host nation, proceed to the tournament phase which is often called the World Cup finals.

Development of the FIFA World Cup

FIFA, the international football federation, founded in 1904, began to organize matches between international football teams soon after its establishment. Football became an official sport at the 1908 Summer Olympic Games in London, contested by amateur teams.

In 1924, at its Congress, FIFA agreed to take over responsibility for organizing the Olympic Football Tournament, ratifying the proposal that:

“On condition that the Olympic Football Tournament takes place in accordance with the Regulations of FIFA, the latter shall recognize this as a world football championship.” (www.FIFA.com)

The success of the football tournaments at the 1924 and 1928 Olympics, with the final in 1924 being watched by 60,000 spectators, consolidated in FIFA – under the leadership of FIFA President, Jules Rimet – the wish to run its own football championship tournament outside of the Olympics:

“Following a proposal of the Executive Committee, the FIFA Congress in Amsterdam on 26 May 1928 decided to stage an official FIFA World Championship: the World Cup was born!”

The following year Uruguay, who had twice won the Olympic football tournament were appointed as hosts of the first FIFA World Cup™.

Early FIFA World Cup™ Tournaments

The 1930 FIFA World Cup™ Uruguay

The first tournament was, according to the FIFA archive “one of a kind.”² Taking place wholly in the Uruguay capital city, Montevideo, 13 countries competed in the tournament: seven Latin American nations, USA and Mexico and four European national teams.³

Whilst France, Belgium, Yugoslavia and Romania, made the long sea journey to compete in Uruguay, some other European countries were put off by the two months that players would be away from their jobs and homes.

The 1934 FIFA World Cup™ Italy

Operating on a bigger scale than the first tournament, the 1934 FIFA World Cup™ Italy involved 10 stadia in eight host cities in Italy and live radio broadcasts to eight of the competing countries. With the success of the first tournament, the competition now involved

2. “Hosts Uruguay beat arch-rivals to first world crown,” FIFA (website), 22 March 2007, <https://www.fifa.com/worldcup/news/hosts-uruguay-beat-arch-rivals-first-world-crown-502035>.

3. Ibid.

a 32-team first qualifying phase, from which 16 teams qualified as finalists.⁴ Previous winners, Uruguay, was absent from the tournament in protest that Italy had refused to travel to the previous Uruguay tournament.

The 1938 FIFA World Cup™ France

Against the gathering dark clouds of World War II, the third tournament was contested by only 15 national teams, as Germany had recently annexed Austria. Argentina stayed away, but Brazil travelled to Europe to compete for the first time in one of the last international sporting events before World War II.⁵

1950s onwards

The FIFA World Cup™ initially continued to experiment and develop the format of the tournament. From a final including a four-team mini league in 1950,⁶ to the introduction of seeded and unseeded teams in 1954,⁷ to the first international television coverage of the tournament in 1958,⁸ removing the need for play-off games in favour of goal difference to decide who advanced to the finals when teams were tied on points in 1962,⁹ the format and hosting of the tournament evolved as the competition grew both in terms of the number of

4. “Delight for the Azzurri as home advantage tells,” FIFA (website), 22 March 2007, <https://www.fifa.com/worldcup/news/delight-for-the-azzurri-home-advantage-tells-502051>.

5. “Pozzo the mastermind as Italy retain their crown,” FIFA (website), 22 March 2007, <https://www.fifa.com/worldcup/news/pozzo-the-mastermind-italy-retain-their-crown-502063>.

6. “1950 FIFA World Cup Brazil™,” FIFA (website), <https://www.fifa.com/worldcup/archive/brazil1950/index.html>.

7. “Hurt for Hungary as Germans achieve a miracle,” FIFA (website), 22 March 2007, <https://www.fifa.com/worldcup/news/hurt-for-hungary-germans-achieve-miracle-502087>.

8. “A star is born as Brazil are champions at last,” FIFA (website), 22 March 2007, <https://www.fifa.com/worldcup/news/star-born-brazil-are-champions-last-502100>.

9. “Brazil flying high with 'Little Bird' Garrincha,” FIFA (website), 22 March 2007, <https://www.fifa.com/worldcup/news/brazil-flying-high-with-little-bird-garrincha-502112>.

teams competing, and with the availability of travel and technology. The FIFA World Cup™ tournament expanded from 16 to 24 teams in 1982.

Until 1990, the FIFA World Cup™ was always hosted either in South America or Europe. The 1990 hosts were again Italy, 56 years after their first time as hosts, as they gave a facelift to 10 of their original World Cup stadia and added two new stadia.

In 1994, the United States was the setting for the “hugely successful” 15th FIFA World Cup™.¹⁰ Soccer in the USA had not, to that point certainly, held the widespread appeal of sports such as baseball, American Football and basketball, and some were surprised when USA were granted the rights to host the 1994 tournament,¹¹ but FIFA President, Joao Havelange, was vindicated with a record total attendance of 3,587,538 spectators for 1994 FIFA World Cup Finals™ USA and 147 national teams¹² competed for the right to play in the last 24 team tournament before the FIFA World Cup™ tournament expanded to 32 teams for the 1998 tournament.¹³

Expansion of the number of countries able to qualify for the FIFA World Cup™ Finals allowed a greater number of teams from Asia, Africa and North America to take part, so that the tournament could now reach a growing international audience.

2018 FIFA World Cup Russia™

The most recent FIFA World Cup™ was hosted by Russia and was attended by over one million fans.

10. Ibid.

11. Ibid.

12. Ibid.

13. Brian Glanville, *The Story of the World Cup* (Faber, 2005).

Russia's objective, in the words of organising committee chief, Alexei Sorokin, was to "show fans "an unforgettable, colourful Russia."¹⁴

The geographic size of Russia meant that the infrastructural requirements of hosting the World Cup were considerable in scale, although the country was able to benefit, in part, from the facilities used for the 2014 Sochi Winter Olympics. Although estimates vary considerably, from \$13 billion to over \$100 billion, infrastructural development to host the tournament has included 12 stadia in 11 cities, new terminals for airports in six cities, building 21 new hotels in host cities and 14 hospitals were re-equipped for the tournament.

Given the distances between host cities – for example Volgograd is 600 miles from Moscow – fans either flew or else took overnight trips on Russian railways, so 440,00 free seats on trains were included with official Fan ID, 728 long distance trains ran on 31 routes and railway stations were equipped with airport style security.¹⁵ (More details of the characteristics and demographics of Russia are provided in Appendix 4, alongside those of Qatar, USA, Canada and Mexico).

It is clear that the characteristics of the 2022 FIFA World Cup Qatar™ will, in some ways, be quite different to Russia, given the much more compact nature and proximity of the stadia and other infrastructure although the format of the 32-team format will be the same.

With the introduction of Video Analysis technology, 13 of the total 36 referees and 63 assistant referees for the Russia tournament were used to run VAR, a technology which was used for the first time in 2018.

14. "FIFA World Cup 2018: Hosts Russia face logistical, cultural challenges as they welcome guests," MyKhel (website), 7 June 2017, <https://www.mykhel.com/football/fifa-world-cup-2018-hosts-russia-face-logistical-cultural-challenges-091016.html>.

15. Jamie Carter, "The World Cup in Motion: the infrastructure behind the biggest show on earth," techRadar (website), 19 June 2018, https://www.techradar.com/uk/news/the-world-cup-in-motion-the-infrastructure-behind-the-greatest-show-on-earth_

Expansion to a 48 Team Competition

On the 17th January 2017, FIFA Executive Committee voted unanimously in favour of expanding the competition in the FIFA World Cup™ Finals to 48 teams for the 2026 tournament.¹⁶

FIFA President, Gianni Infantino, explained the decision as follows:

“We are in the 21st century and we have to shape the World Cup of the 21st century (...) It is the future. Football is more than just Europe and South America, football is global. The football fever you have in a country that qualifies for the World Cup is the biggest promotional tool for football you can have. This football promotion, in many parts of the world where today they have no chance to play [at the World Cup], was at the top of our thoughts.”

Whilst this decision is made on the basis of sporting aims, FIFA Research also points to the growth in global audience and revenue which might derive from this larger and more inclusive tournament.¹⁷

The final format of the expanded tournament was still, on its announcement in 2017, open for further discussion, but ESPN reported that one of five possible options being considered was a format where the 48 teams would be divided into 16 groups, each of three teams, who would play each other with the top two from each group progressing. This would mean the addition of a round of 32 after the group stages, with an increase from 64 games to 80 games in a slightly longer 32 days format rather than the current month.

16. “World Cup: FIFA to expand competition to 48 teams after vote,” *BBC Sport*, 10 January 2017, <https://www.bbc.co.uk/sport/football/38565246>.

17. “FIFA research says 48-team World Cup is the best option for reform,” *ESPN*, 23 December 2016, <http://www.espn.co.uk/football/fifa-world-cup/story/3025606/fifa-research-says-48-team-world-cup-is-the-best-option-for-reform>.

2026 FIFA World Cup Canada, USA, Mexico™

As of June 2018,¹⁸ the details of the three-host, 48-game 2026 FIFA World Cup™ are still at the planning stages.¹⁹ Announced in early 2017, the proposed new 48-team format is due for introduction at the 2026 FIFA World Cup™, which will be hosted in USA, Mexico and Canada.²⁰

In 2018, however, it has been reported²¹ that 23 host cities across the three countries are bidding to be among the eventual 16 host cities. Of a possible 80 games, Mexico and Canada are expected to host 10 matches each, using three stadia, with the US hosting the remaining 60 games in 10 stadia.

The final will be held in New York at the NFL New York Giants and New York Jets MetLife Stadium with its 84,953-capacity. It is not yet clear whether all three host countries will be awarded automatic qualification places for the tournament.²²

The 2026 tournament will be the first to be hosted between three different countries, with different geography, different cultures and different infrastructural issues. Whilst the distances between venues and matches in Russia was large – some 1,900 miles lay between the two furthest apart stadia - the distances in this three country-hosted tournament will be still larger. The most northern host city (Edmonton, Canada) is almost 3,000 miles from the most southern Mexico City, Mexico.

18. Martin Belam, “Three hosts, 48 teams: how the 2026 World Cup will work,” *The Guardian*, 13 June 2018, <https://www.theguardian.com/football/2018/jun/13/three-hosts-48-teams-how-the-2026-world-cup-will-work-united>.

19. Ibid.

20. “Canada, Mexico and USA selected as hosts of the 2026 FIFA World Cup™,” FIFA (website), 13 June 2018, <https://www.fifa.com/about-fifa/news/y=2018/m=6/news=canada-mexico-and-usa-selected-as-hosts-of-the-2026-fifa-world-cuptm.html>.

21. Ibid.

22. “World Cup 2026: Canada, US & Mexico joint bid wins right to host tournament,” *BBC Sport*, 13 June 2018, <https://www.bbc.co.uk/sport/football/44464913>.



The 23 venues for World Cup 2026, in Canada, the United States and Mexico (Source: *BBC Sport*, <https://www.bbc.co.uk/sport/football/44464913>.)

Given that this is also the first time that the new 48-team format will be used, resulting in a longer competition period, there will undoubtedly be some new and distinctive challenges and opportunities for the hosts of the 2026 FIFA World Cup.

SUMMARY

Over the history of the FIFA World Cup tournament, the competition has grown and changed in various ways as it has developed to the global football tournament we see today.

Each country, each host nation and each tournament has some common elements and also faces distinctive challenges and opportunities.

This case study highlights some of the milestones in the history of the tournament and highlights some of the characteristics of recent hosts Russia, as well as future hosts Qatar and Canada, USA and Mexico to help students to consider what planning and operational

challenges should be accounted for in these different geographic contexts and with the evolution of the tournament format.

Questions

1. What are the biggest challenges and opportunities of running an amazing 2022 FIFA World Cup Qatar™, compared to those of running the 2018 tournament in Russia?
2. What learning from the 2018 FIFA World Cup Russia™ would you propose to take forwards and apply in the preparation and hosting of the 2022 FIFA World Cup Qatar™?
3. What do you anticipate will be the biggest challenges of running a three host, 48 game 2026 FIFA World Cup™ tournament across Mexico, USA and Canada?

Appendices

Appendix 1:

World Cup	Teams	Format
1930 Uruguay	13	1 group of 4 and 3 groups of 3, with only top team progressing to semi-finals
1934 Italy	16	Straight knockout tournament
1950 Brazil	15 (13 took part)	3 groups of 4 and 1 group of 3, with top side progressing to final group of four
1954 Switzerland	16	4 groups of 4, but only 2 games in each group, with top 2 sides through to quarter-finals
1958 Sweden	16	4 groups of 4, this time with 3 games. Top 2 sides through to quarter-finals
1974 West Germany	16	4 groups of 4 but now followed with 2 groups of 4, the 2 top sides competing the final
1982 Spain	24	6 groups of 4 followed by 4 groups of 3, the winner of each qualifying for the semi-finals
1986 Mexico	24	6 groups of 4, top 2 sides and 4 best 3rd-placed teams qualifying for round of 16
1998 France	32	8 groups of 4, top 2 sides progressing to knockout rounds

FIFA World Cup Competition Format History (Source: *BBC Sport*, Accessed 29 September 2018, <https://www.bbc.com/timelines/zp2mmp3>.)

Appendix 2:

Confederation Qualifying Places for a 48-game World Cup (Source: *The Guardian*, Accessed 29 September 2018, <https://www.theguardian.com/football/2018/jun/13/three-hosts-48-teams-how-the-2026-world-cup-will-work-united>)

A 48-game format expands the number of places at the finals available to teams of every confederation. The new allocation of spaces is:

- AFC (Asia) – eight places (up from 4.5)
- Caf (Africa) – nine places (up from 5)
- Concacaf (North and Central America) – six places, of which three go to hosts (up from 3.5)
- Conmebol (South America) – six places (up from 4.5)
- OFC (Oceania) – one place (up from 0.5)
- Uefa (Europe) – 16 places (up from 13)

In addition there will be two final spots available from a new World Cup play-off mini-tournament.

Appendix 3 (Source: Wikipedia)

Russia Demographics

Capital and largest city	Moscow (<i>Москва</i>) 55°45′N 37°37′E
Official language	Russian
Ethnic groups (2010)^[2]	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 81.0% Russian • 3.7% Tatar • 1.4% Ukrainian • 1.1% Bashkir • 1.2% Armenian • 1.0% Chuvash • 11.0% others / unspecified
Area	
• Total	17,098,246 km ² (6,601,670 sq mi)
• Water (%)	13 ^[7] (including swamps)
Population	
• 2018 estimate	144,526,636 (9th)
• Density	8.4/km ² (21.8/sq mi) (225th)
GDP (PPP)	
• Total	\$9.152 trillion ^[9] (6th)
• Per capita	\$28,957 ^[9] (49th)
Currency	Russian ruble (₽) (RUB)
Time zone	UTC+2 to +12

At 17,125,200 square kilometres (6,612,100 sq mi) Russia is the largest country in the world by area, covering more than one-eighth of the Earth's inhabited land area, and the ninth most populous, with over 144 million people as of December 2017. About 77 per cent of the population live in the western, European part of the country. Russia's capital, Moscow, is the largest metropolitan area in Europe proper and one of the largest cities in the world; other major cities include Saint Petersburg, Novosibirsk, Yekaterinburg and Nizhny Novgorod.

Qatar Demographics

Capital and largest city	Doha 25°18′N 51°31′E
Official languages	Arabic
Other languages	English
Ethnic groups (2015^[1])	11.6% Qatari 88.4% non-Qatari
Area	
• Total	11,581 km ² (4,471 sq mi) (158th)
• Water (%)	0.8
Population	
• 2017 estimate	2,641,669 ^[2] (140th)
• 2010 census	1,699,435 ^[3] (148th)
• Density	176/km ² (455.8/sq mi) (76th)
GDP (PPP)	
• Total	\$357.338 billion ^[4] (51st)

• Per capita	\$128,702 ^[4] (1st)
Currency	Riyal (QAR)
Time zone	UTC+3 (AST)

USA Demographics

Capital	Washington, D.C. 38°53'N 77°01'W
Largest city	New York City 40°43'N 74°00'W
National language	English
Ethnic groups (2016)	By race: 77.1% White 13.3% Black 5.6% Asian 2.6% Other/multiracial 1.2% Native 0.2% Pacific Islander Ethnicity: 17.6% Hispanic or Latino 82.4% non-Hispanic or Latino
Area	
• Total area	3,796,742 sq mi (9,833,520 km ²) ^[8] (3rd/4th)
• Water (%)	6.97
• Total land area	3,531,905 sq mi (9,147,590 km ²)
Population	
• 2017 estimate	325,719,178(3rd)
• 2010 census	308,745,538 (3rd)
• Density	85/sq mi (32.8/km ²) (179th)
GDP (PPP)	
• Total	\$19.390 trillion(2nd)
• Per capita	\$59,501 (11th)
Currency	United States dollar (\$) (USD)
Time zone	UTC−4 to −12, +10, +11
• Summer (DST)	UTC−4 to −10

Canada Demographics

Capital	Ottawa 45°24'N 75°40'W
Largest city	Toronto
Official languages	• EnglishFrench
Area	
• Total area	9,984,670 km ² (3,855,100 sq mi) (2nd)
• Water (%)	8.92
• Total land area	9,093,507 km ² (3,511,023 sq mi)
Population	
• Q2 2018 estimate	37,067,011 (38th)
• 2016 census	35,151,728
• Density	3.92/km ² (10.2/sq mi) (228th)

GDP (PPP)	2018 estimate
• Total	\$1.847 trillion (15th)
• Per capita	\$49,775 (20th)
Currency	Canadian dollar (\$) (CAD)
Time zone	UTC−3.5 to −8
• Summer (DST)	UTC−2.5 to −7

Mexico Demographics

Capital and largest city	Mexico City 19°26'N 99°08'W
National language	Spanish (<i>de facto</i>)
Area	
• Total	1,972,550 km ² (761,610 sq mi) (13th)
• Water (%)	2.5
Population	
• 2017 estimate	123,675,325 ^[5] (11th)
• Density	61/km ² (158.0/sq mi) (142nd)
GDP (PPP)	
• Total	\$2.498 trillion ¹ (11th)
• Per capita	\$20,028(64th)
Currency	Peso (MXN)
Time zone	UTC−8 to −5 (<i>See Time in Mexico</i>)
• Summer (DST)	UTC−7 to −5 (varies)

Appendix 4

Source: www.FIFA.com

2018 FIFA World Cup Russia in a Snapshot

Teaching Note

This case study is intended as a “big picture” strategic planning case study in which students will think about the broad differences in geography, demographics and other infrastructure between the various host countries, together with changes to the tournament structure such as VAR and, for 2026, the expanded tournament format.

Question 1: What are the biggest challenges and opportunities of running an amazing 2022 FIFA World Cup Qatar™, compared to those of running the 2018 tournament in Russia?

For the opening question, students are asked to reflect back on the recent experience of the 2018 FIFA World Cup Russia™, perhaps also using the material contained in appendices together with their own research and experiences.

The evolution of the FIFA World Cup tournament has been used to demonstrate that the tournament has changed in a number of ways over its history, has been contested by a variety of combinations of teams, and has been hosted in different regions and countries over the course of its evolution, with a common theme of excellent sporting achievement and an extraordinary experience for all of those involved.

The focus of the case study is, however on the more recent tournaments.

As the tournament in Russia is recent and there is now a growing body of data about the tournament, the starting question is to allow students to reflect back on the 2018 FIFA World Cup Russia™ and to reflect upon the main differences between hosting in a geographically large country, as in the case of Russia, and the Qatari context for the 2022 FIFA World Cup Qatar™.

The points raised might both be Opportunities, or in some instances Challenges, or perhaps, in some cases, a point might both provide a challenge and an opportunity.

Question 2: What learning from the 2018 FIFA World Cup Russia™ would you propose to take forwards and apply in the preparation and hosting of the 2022 FIFA World Cup Qatar™?

The second question asks students to apply the learning from Russia to a different context, and to provide some evaluation and justification for the evaluation of which elements they would propose to learn from and which – for example – might not apply.

In Russia, for example, the large geographic distance posed a challenge to get fans between stadia, which was partly overcome by bundling train tickets with event tickets, but this would not apply in Qatar. Russia had some existing stadia from Sochi Winter Olympics, and so like Qatar and other hosts, some stadia were developed from existing stadia and other sporting events and others built new for the 2018 FIFA World Cup Russia™. Students might consider whether there is any learning about best practice from both of these and how this compares and contrasts with preparations for 2022 FIFA World Cup Qatar™.

Question 3: What do you anticipate will be the biggest challenges of running a three host, 48 game 2026 FIFA World Cup™ tournament across Mexico, USA and Canada?

To further develop the “big picture” thinking, the case study then goes on to consider the third context of the 2026 FIFA World Cup™ tournament across Mexico, USA and Canada and the proposed changes in format combined with the three country hosting model.

From the different lens used to view each tournament in the context of the review of the history of the FIFA World Cup tournament, it is intended that students will consider both what is distinctive about

each tournament, and what are the common elements of sporting achievement, passion for sport, football and other legacy and which underpin each tournament irrespective of differences in macro environmental differences of the host country.

Students might be expected to identify possible challenges of coordinating and communication across three countries and three Football Federations. They may also reference distance, language, travel between countries and venues for fans, media and other stakeholders.

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