

Response Ready: The Dual Mandate

A Public Sector Dual-Mandate Simulation for Project Managers and Executives

The Brief

A national protection agency identified a critical mindset gap in their Project Executives. While excellent at delivering planned infrastructure projects ("Planned Surgery"), they treated emergency incidents as frustrating "interruptions" rather than their primary duty.

The Goal: The stakeholder needed to reframe the operating model. The simulation had to force Project Managers to master the "Mode Switch" — instantly pivoting from rigid Gateway governance to high-stakes incident response — without neglecting the strict audit trails required by government spending rules.

Four primary learning objectives were established:

1. **Master the Mode Switch** — Instantly pivot from project governance to incident response when Category 1 or 2 events demand it
2. **Apply ICP Ruthlessly** — Use the Incident Classification Protocol to resist the temptation to over-respond to low-priority incidents
3. **Use the SRC Framework Effectively** — Deploy contractors as strategic surge capacity, not as a substitute for staff capability
4. **Maintain Compliance Under Pressure** — Keep the audit trail intact even when floodwater is rising, proving the painful lesson: *"If it's not in the system, it didn't happen"*

The brief specified a half-day format for 12-16 participants with a three-round narrative arc progressing from "Planned Surgery" through "The Rising Water" to "Gold Command."

The Solution

Teams manage a portfolio of capital projects (managing Business Cases and Gateway Reviews) while simultaneously staffing an Incident Response rota. They must balance the "Iron Triangle" of project delivery against the unpredictable demands of Gold Command escalations.

Core Mechanic: The Interrupt System

Incidents are not scheduled — they physically interrupt play. When a Category 1 event hits, teams must physically halt their Business Case review, stop the timer, and redeploy their

limited Staff Pool to the Incident Response Zone. This visceral "Mode Switch" makes the trade-off between project delivery and public safety impossible to ignore.

Key Feature: Compliance Debt (The NIRS Log)

In the heat of a crisis, teams are tempted to skip the paperwork to "get the job done." The simulation tracks this via the NIRS Log (National Incident Recording System). If teams fail to log decisions, "Compliance Debt" accumulates quietly — only to detonate during the Round 3 Audit, proving the painful lesson: *"If it's not in the system, it didn't happen."*

The Fatigue Track

Over-using staff without rest pushes them into the Error Zone on the Fatigue Track, forcing players to make difficult ethical choices between burning out their team or missing a deadline.

Gold Command Escalation

When the crisis reaches national scale in Round 3, Gold Command activates — expanding contractor capacity but not eliminating the fundamental scarcity of internal expertise. Teams must manage mutual aid, media requests, data demands, and cascading incidents simultaneously.

Assessment

Independent AI Assessment Score: 90/100

Dimension	Score
Mechanical Quality	22/25
Strategic Depth	23/25
Educational Value	24/25
Playability	21/25

Scored by ChatGPT (OpenAI) using a structured playtest methodology: the AI independently played the full simulation, calculated scores using the documented rules, and evaluated across four standardised dimensions.

Alignment with Learning Objectives

The simulation directly operationalises the "Dual Mandate" — project delivery through Gateway milestones and incident response through physical redeployment of scarce field teams. The interrupt mechanic forces an immediate cognitive and physical shift that is structurally unavoidable, not merely encouraged. ICP triage logic is deeply embedded: Category 3 and 4 incidents actively tempt over-response but punish it through fatigue and

opportunity cost, teaching teams that "doing nothing is often the correct operational choice."

Facilitation Design

The Facilitator Manual meets and arguably exceeds the brief's requirements for delivery by non-specialist trainers, with step-by-step procedures, clear timing cues, explicit rationale behind mechanics, strong debrief scaffolding, and a comprehensive glossary. The inclusion of diagnostic warning signs ("teams managing everything easily", "no mutual aid happening") is particularly valuable for maintaining learning integrity.

Mechanical Rigour

The simulation was independently playtested by AI, confirming that every incident response, project decision, and resource allocation produces quantified, unambiguous outcomes. The resource system is properly interlocked — the 4-team hard cap, fatigue accumulation, contractor activation triggers, compliance logging choices, and budget constraints all collide in ways that create genuine operational pressure. The scoring formula's balanced weighting across five dimensions (project delivery, incident response, compliance, resource efficiency, and collaboration) prevents any single-dimension strategy from dominating.

Structural Excellence

The three-round arc precisely mirrors the brief's desired progression: Round 1 (Planned Surgery) is calm and governance-focused, Round 2 (The Rising Water) introduces distraction, temptation, and triage discipline, and Round 3 (Gold Command) delivers full operational overload. The compliance debt mechanic — where logging shortcuts accumulate quietly then detonate during audits — is one of the simulation's strongest features, naturally producing the mantra *"If it's not in IRS, it didn't happen"* without didactic instruction.

Summary Specifications

Attribute	Detail
Duration	4 hours (half-day format)
Participants	12-16 (Flexible team structures)
Domain	Public Sector — Regional Protection Agency
Complexity	Intermediate-Advanced (Governance Focus)
Core Mechanics	Interrupt system, ICP triage, compliance debt, fatigue tracking, Gold Command escalation, mutual aid
Physical Components	Team dashboards, central command board, incident cards, project cards, decision cards, staff/contractor/fatigue tokens

Attribute	Detail
Facilitator Requirement	L&D Professional (Subject matter expertise not required due to script depth)

Response Ready: The Dual Mandate was developed as a demonstration simulation to showcase The Sim Smithy's capability for translating complex public sector operating models into engaging, behaviour-shaping learning experiences.