



insight report

# security staffing

**Are you optimised?**

A diagnostic benchmarking guide and case study from Adventis Consulting — drawing on our work with Sydney Airport and leading airports worldwide.



# BENCHMARKING

There is no one-size-fits-all measure of security efficiency and performance, with airport design and staffing arrangements varying around the world. But the guide below gives an indication of the most reliable indicators of operational maturity - or early warning signs. How do you measure up?

## OPERATIONAL SETUP

<b>Screening checkpoints</b>	Multiple, widely dispersed gate-based checkpoints. Mostly fixed posts rather than demand-variable facilities.	Centralised screening areas with lane operations tailored to variable passenger demand throughout the day.
<b>Lane performance</b>	Lane throughput is unmeasured and untested, and not visible in real-time to the operation. No baseline for what good looks like. Clear bottlenecks in throughput.	Subject to continuous testing, experimentation, and improvement. Throughput exceeding 45 pax per ASO hour (higher without body scanning).
<b>Queuing and compliance</b>	Unpredictable spikes in passenger queuing metrics, with daily queues over 10 minutes. Contraventions of compliance regulations.	Passenger queuing under 5 minutes, with known/predictable exceptions. Fully regulation-compliant.

## DEMAND AND RESOURCE ALIGNMENT

<b>Lane utilisation</b>	Lanes tend to operate at below 70% of maximum capacity on average, with limited measurement or benchmarking	Lanes operate at above 80% of maximum capacity on average, balancing efficiency and resilience to surges
<b>Break design</b>	Breaks covered by a dedicated relief team providing flat cover across the whole day – including during peaks	Breaks designed to coincide with lulls in demand, combined with staggered shift starts and smart break-allowance rules.
<b>Shifts and rosters</b>	Outdated legacy rosters that no longer reflect demand patterns, with concerns from both staff and the business	Rosters and contracts that deliberately balance operational needs, staff quality of life, and planning feasibility
<b>Resourcing flexibility</b>	A fixed, flat supply of shifts, leaving either overtime or permanent overstaffing to adapt to demand variation	Working arrangements – contracts, rosters, shift structures – that allow resourcing to flex up or down in line with demand

## PLANNING & DECISION-MAKING

<b>Cost-per-passenger visibility</b>	Cost per passenger is not systematically measured or modelled. Key cost drivers are unknown or untested. Metrics vary between FTE, cost, hours and passengers.	An end-to-end cost model with well-understood variables: utilisation, lane efficiency, availability, pay structures. Understood in hours-based and cost-based metrics.
<b>Planning transparency</b>	Padding factors buried in formulas, disguising cost-vs-resilience trade-offs. Decisions lack clear evidence.	Trade-off factors fully transparent and visualised, highlighting moments where business decisions are needed
<b>Daily and weekly planning</b>	Low-value, poorly-informed planning sessions, or reliance on an individual role with little decision sharing.	Slick, well-informed sessions to surface and quickly resolve key decision points, and review previous decisions
<b>Strategic planning</b>	Forward planning based on thin-slice sampling or simple carrying-forward of existing arrangements, without a clear view of all the interconnected moving parts. Evaluating the future is time-consuming and divisive.	12-month forecasts showing passenger presentation at 15-minute granularity, feeding a rounded view of resilience over a full season / year to inform strategic approach. Ability to test different scenarios with confidence.
<b>Technological maturity</b>	High-effort, low-transparency systems with no real-time or strategic modelling capability. Fragmented data	Aligned, accessible systems with decision-support for real-time deployment through to long-term strategic modelling

## PEOPLE & GOVERNANCE

<b>Workforce engagement</b>	Bad-faith friction around proposed roster or workforce changes. No evidence base behind management proposals	Positive engagement between management and staff reps, underpinned by well-supported, transparent proposals
<b>Supplier relationship</b>	Antagonistic commercial priorities between airport and service provider. Friction-driven relationship	Cooperative, partnership-driven relationship with win-win commercial incentives governing efficiency and resilience
<b>Business alignment</b>	Mistrust and cross-wires between executive, operations and rostering/planning functions.	Positive internal dialogue based on confidence in the evidence base for decisions. Alignment on concepts and language.

Sydney Airport's new ownership group recognised some of these challenges. Here's how a structured diagnostic and redesign programme delivered measurable results.

## BACKGROUND

Sydney Airport's new ownership group faced a critical challenge: security operations had been shaped by multiple overlapping changes – post-COVID recovering passenger volumes with new patterns, improvements in lane technology and throughputs, universal body scanning regulations, and evolving workforce expectations – yet there was no coherent, evidence-based view of what the operation actually required.

Headline indicators suggested headcount and hours were too high and cost per passenger was under pressure. But without a bottom-up understanding of where inefficiencies sat, or how far change could be pushed without damaging service or workforce stability, leadership could not move with confidence.

*Adventis was engaged to provide that clarity – and then to design and implement the solution.*



*“What was missing was confidence. There was no coherent, bottom-up view of what the operation actually required across the year, where inefficiencies sat, or how far change could be pushed.”*

## THE CHALLENGE

**Misaligned staffing** Passenger volumes had returned post-recovery, but peaks had shifted and behaviour had changed. Rosters designed for the old world no longer matched the new reality.

**Layered complexity** New screening technology, regulatory changes (universal body scanning), cost-of-living workforce pressures, and multi-party contractual structures all compounded the problem.

**Opaque planning** Strategic and tactical resourcing decisions lacked transparency and clear evidence, frustrating cross-functional dialogue and hiding important assumptions and trade-offs.

**Dual ambition** Leadership wanted to reduce cost per passenger decisively – but also to improve roster quality and workforce experience, not just cut headcount.



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# OUR APPROACH

Adventis Consulting are specialists in front line staff planning and optimisation, with decades of experience working with airport security teams at leading airports around the world.

Drawing on this experience and our data diagnostics, modelling and optimisation toolkit, we worked as an integrated team alongside Sydney Airport and Certis (security provider), embedding ourselves across operational and planning functions. Our approach followed 5 key phases:

1

## ESTABLISHING A SHARED VIEW OF REALITY

Collating, organising, validating and challenging all moving parts of the existing staffing setup, including long- and short-term plans, and the basis for decision making.

Uncovering the 'hidden system'

2

## BUILDING A TRUE HEADCOUNT REQUIREMENT

Constructed a bottom-up workload model across a full year: variable passenger demand, fixed checkpoint coverage, bag screening, supervisory layers, and the complete seasonal pattern of peaks and troughs. With a shift-cover overlay to gauge staffing cover.

An evidence-based headcount to target

3

## ALIGNING ON TARGETS AND TRADE-OFFS

Worked with airport and provider leadership to interpret findings jointly — producing a shared view of ambitious but credible headcount and cost-per-passenger targets, with the trade-offs made explicit.

Turning analysis into a mandate for change

4

## ROSTER SOLUTION DESIGN AND IMPLEMENTATION

Full roster redesign — shifts aligned to demand, improved break structures, increased regularity, and more full-time roles. Delivered through seasonal iterations to allow progressive adaptation.

A new suite of rosters, fit-for-purpose

5

## ENABLING BETTER PLANNING GOING FORWARD

Deployed Adventis's proprietary tools for diagnostics, demand modelling, and ongoing planning support — building a more capable planning function, not just a better plan.

Sustainable capability, not a one-off fix



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# RESULTS

The impact was both measurable and structural, delivering benefits across cost, workforce, operations, and the client-provider relationship.

## Efficiency & Cost

- Progressive reductions in cost per passenger
- Higher passenger volumes delivered with lower headcount over successive seasons
- Shifts better aligned to demand with more efficient break planning

## Workforce & Rosters

- Increased availability of full-time roles
- Greater choice, flexibility, and regularity within rosters
- Team-based accountability strengthening workforce experience

## Operational Control

- Clearer understanding of FTE, hours, and seasonality across the business
- Smoother, more confident decision making at strategic and tactical level

## Planning & Relationships

- Explicit visibility of cost versus resilience trade-offs
- Improved transparency and control of overtime
- Long-term security contract re-awarded to incumbent provider

*“Adventis' expertise and commitment has underpinned the transformation of our security operations - in particular through the quality of our seasonal rosters and day-to-day planning.*

*We've seen a step change in cost efficiency, staff wellbeing, and decision-making confidence since the implementation of the new rosters. The Adventis team have a wealth of experience to share and I have really enjoyed working with them.”*

**Graham White** Head of Security, Sydney Airport

## GET IN TOUCH

If you recognised warning signs in your own operation, we'd welcome a confidential conversation. Our diagnostic approach is designed to give you clarity — quickly and without disruption.

Visit our website  
[www.adventisconsulting.com](http://www.adventisconsulting.com)

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