

Film industry roles: Location Manager

What Is a Location Manager?

Within the film industry, the primary job of the location manager is to research and secure the perfect locations to film a movie. The location manager handles the creative side of finding appropriate locations, but they also handle the logistics needed to make that location work, like paying the property owners, securing permits, and alerting neighbors about the film shoot. The location manager reports to the production designer, but collaborates frequently with the director. The location manager oversees and hires the entire location department.

The location manager's job differs from other film crew jobs in that they are not explicitly involved in the actual filming. The location manager only looks for and maintains the space where filming is set to take place.

What Are the Responsibilities of a Location Manager?

The location manager does the bulk of their job during the pre-production and production phases of a film, ensuring that all locations are secured and ready for filming. A location manager's job is over as soon as principal photography ends, meaning they do not work during post-production.

5 Key Responsibilities of a Location Manager During Pre-Production

The location manager is responsible for finding and locking down filming locations before production commences. They are under a tight deadline to secure locations before production is set to start.

- **1. Collaborate with the director and production designer:** The location manager reads the script and works with the director to get an idea of the types and number of locations needed, and the director's vision for those locations. The three individuals will also discuss non-creative logistics like whether or not the location needs a base camp (the area where all the trailers are parked), how many crew members are needed at each location, etc.
- **1. Hire the team:** The location manager oversees the locations department and is in charge of hiring the various members.
 - 2. The assistant locations manager assists the location manager by managing the current set while the location manager preps the next location.
 - 3. The location scout is the first to scout locations, photograph them, and report their findings back to the location manager.
 - 4. The location assistant(s) are available to perform any task the location manager might need. They primarily keep the locations clean during filming, assist in cleaning up a location after filming has wrapped, and sometimes field inquiries from neighbors or control pedestrian traffic through a shoot.
- **1. Visit the locations:** The scouting process is lengthy, with often three or four visits to a single location before a decision is finalized. The location manager steps in to narrow down the location scout's options and to take photos for reports back to the director and

production designer. During a location scout, the location manager will consider the following questions:

- 2. Is there enough power for the shoot?
 - 3. Is there water and access to toilets?
 - 4. Where can trailers be parked?
 - 5. Is there parking cast and crew at the location?
 - 6. Where is the nearest hospital?
 - 7. Is there a lot of disruptive noise (i.e. planes flying overhead, noisy highways) in the area?
- 1. **Clear the location:** Once the Location Manager decides on a location, they begin the process of clearing the location, which includes:
 - 2. Negotiating contracts and rates with the location owners.
 - 3. Getting film permits from local authorities and police.
 - 4. Getting an insurance policy for the location.
 - 5. Ensuring the location complies with all health, safety, and security requirements.
 - 6. Distributing “resident letters” or “filming notifications,” which are written memos that alert neighbors in the area of filming production and how long it will take. These often include direct contact information for the locations manager.
- 1. **Lock the location:** If all goes well in clearing the location, they enter a phase referred to as “locking down a location,” which means the contracts are signed and the location is secured. During this phase the location manager will make sure the crew has everything they need at the location. This can include:
 - 2. Provide power sources and generators.
 - 3. Install a portable air conditioning unit.
 - 4. Hire a cleaning company.
 - 5. Hire private security to watch the set overnight.
 - 6. Rent dumpsters, tables, and tents for catering.

5 Key Responsibilities of a Location Manager During Production

The location manager monitors the current location and sets up the next day’s location while the film is in production.

- 1. **Provide input on the crew’s schedule:** The location manager and the assistant director map out the crew’s arrival times, distribute maps, and generally ensure that all crew members know where they are supposed to be at all times.
- 2. **Manage the day’s location:** The location manager is on-set to fix or manage any unforeseen issues that might arise. Sometimes the assistant location manager will be on-set instead.
- 3. **Prep the next location:** The location manager simultaneously preps the next day’s set.
- 4. **Act as the community liaison:** Location managers often deal with pedestrians who walk into film sets, angry neighbors, or the police asking to see permits.
- 5. **Wrap:** Once the production is finished filming at a location, it is the location manager’s job to oversee all cleanup and make sure the location is in the same condition as they found it, called “the wrap.”

On the final shoot day, the location manager is done with their job once they have wrapped the final location.

5 Essential Skills You Need to Become a Location Manager

No formal film school or other education is needed to become a location manager. The easiest way to become a location manager is to rise the ranks of the location department.

1. **Leadership:** Location managers have hundreds of things to do at once, so they need to effectively delegate tasks and information to team members and other members of the crew.
2. **Diplomacy:** Location managers need to interface with property owners and the community to diffuse any tension or solve any problems that may arise.
3. **Stamina:** Location managers are often the first to set and the last to leave, meaning they must withstand long days with a lot of physical movement, often outside.
4. **Visual aesthetic:** Locations managers have a good design eye and strong attention to detail.
5. **Local knowledge:** The best locations managers have strong local knowledge with a huge number of unique locations ready for any situation.

Learn more about film crew roles and responsibilities with [Jodie Foster](#) here.