

What to expect in the After-Action Review process

What is an After-Action Review?

An After-Action Review (AAR) is a systematic assessment of preparedness, response, and recovery activities/efforts to outline what happened and why. The assessment reviews strengths, areas for improvement, potential best practices, and identifies mission-critical issues.

Key Questions

The AAR will result in an After-Action Report/Improvement Plan (AAR/IP) and strive to answer five key questions:

- 1. What? (Status)** – What was expected to happen?
- 2. So What? (Impact)** – What actually occurred? What went well, and why?
- 3. Now What? (Actions)** – What can be improved, and how? What capabilities do we need to enhance, improve, or fix?

4. What's the Gap? (Limiting Factors) –

What are the gaps between what we expected to happen, what actually happened, and what can be improved? How are we going to close them? What improvement actions can be made to close the gaps identified? What's the plan?

- 5. When? (ETA to Green)** – Who is responsible, and when should implementation of the improvement plan be completed?

What is the purpose of the AAR?

The AAR is an open and honest professional discussion of the activities and decisions made before, during, and potentially after the incident or event. The AAR does not judge success or failure but attempts to discover why things happened. It identifies what was done well and provides recommendations for improvements to update plans, policies, and procedures.

Who should be involved in the AAR?

Anyone involved in the incident or event with a significant role who can provide a recollection of events and share lessons learned should be involved in the AAR.

The information shared during the AAR process is anonymous; individual names will not appear in the report. We take every possible measure to maintain anonymity throughout the entire AAR process and within the final documents.

How is information collected?

Information and data are collected by a team of experts through various methods,

such as interviews, surveys, focus groups, and document reviews. Responses are non-attributable — themes are gathered and categorized into observations. These are then analyzed, and recommendations are made to facilitate improvement for the organization.

What happens next?

Information and data collected is analyzed and consolidated into a final After-Action Report/Improvement Plan. The After-Action Report summarizes and analyzes the incident and actions taken by highlighting strengths and identifying potential areas of improvement. The Improvement Plan is a living document, owned and managed by the client, that specifically details the areas of improvement identified in the AAR, and includes concrete, measurable actions to close the identified gaps. Each action is assigned an owner, with a timeline for completion, and is tracked in the document. The Improvement Plan is continually monitored, resulting in enhanced preparedness and response capabilities.



Preparedness



Response



Recovery



Mitigation

For more information,
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