



World Health
Organization

#Ready4Response

Tier 2: Ready4Response

Module 3: Response core skills

The OODA loop

Unit 3A

Photo: WHO / C. Cardenas

#Ready4Response



Hi. I'm your facilitator –
Andrew Black

INTRODUCTION

The OODA loop is the theory of decision-making on which emergency response and the Incident Management System (IMS) is based.

Understanding the OODA loop will help you understand how the IMS can support effective emergency response.

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

By the end of this unit, you will be able to:

- describe the decision-making process;
- describe the OODA loop and how it relates to the IMS; and
- explain what is meant by each stage of the OODA loop.

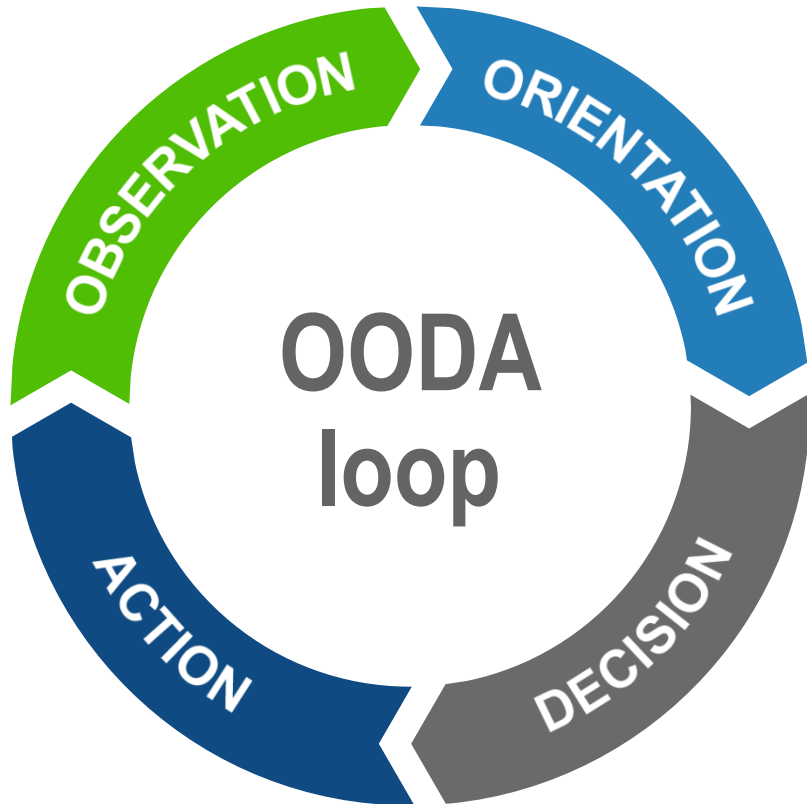
IMS core functions

The IMS comprises 5 core functions – each headed by a Function Team Lead – which must work together as a team to implement a successful response:

- Management
- Operations
- Planning
- Logistics
- Finance and Administration.



THE OODA LOOP



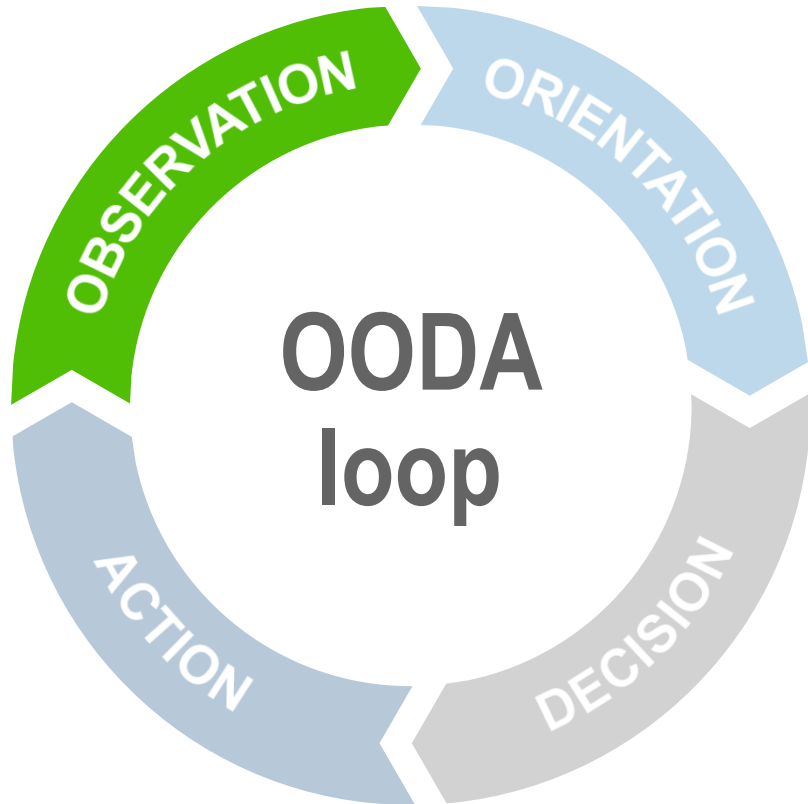
Decision-making theory can help us understand how the IMS is designed to work.

The classic decision-making model is the OODA loop.

This states that making a decision consists of 4 stages:

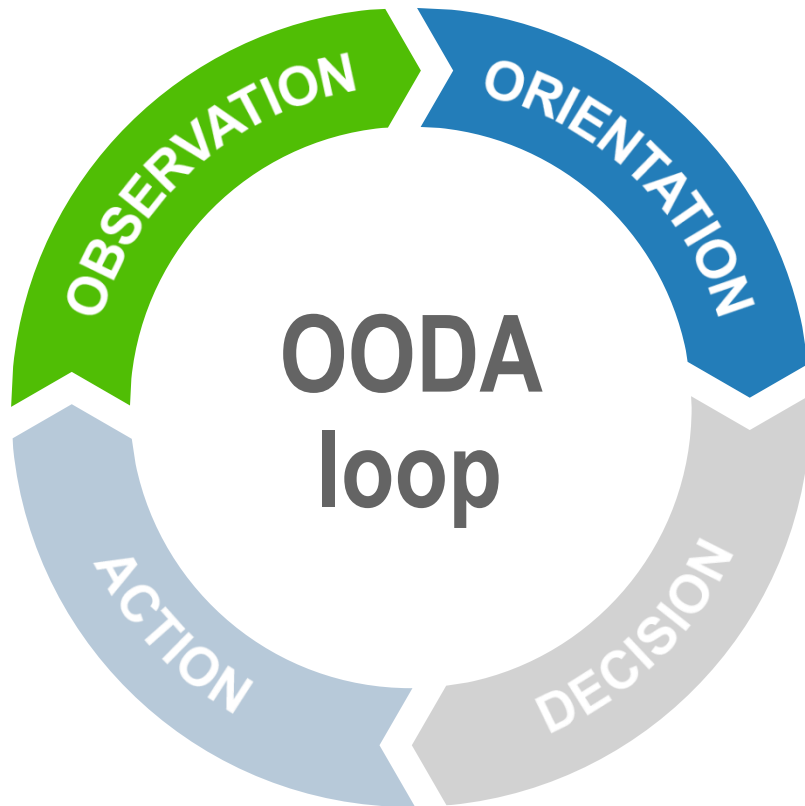
- Observation
- Orientation
- Decision
- Action.

The OODA loop: Observation



Observation: In this stage, we monitor and collect data and information about the incident environment, the affected population and available resources.

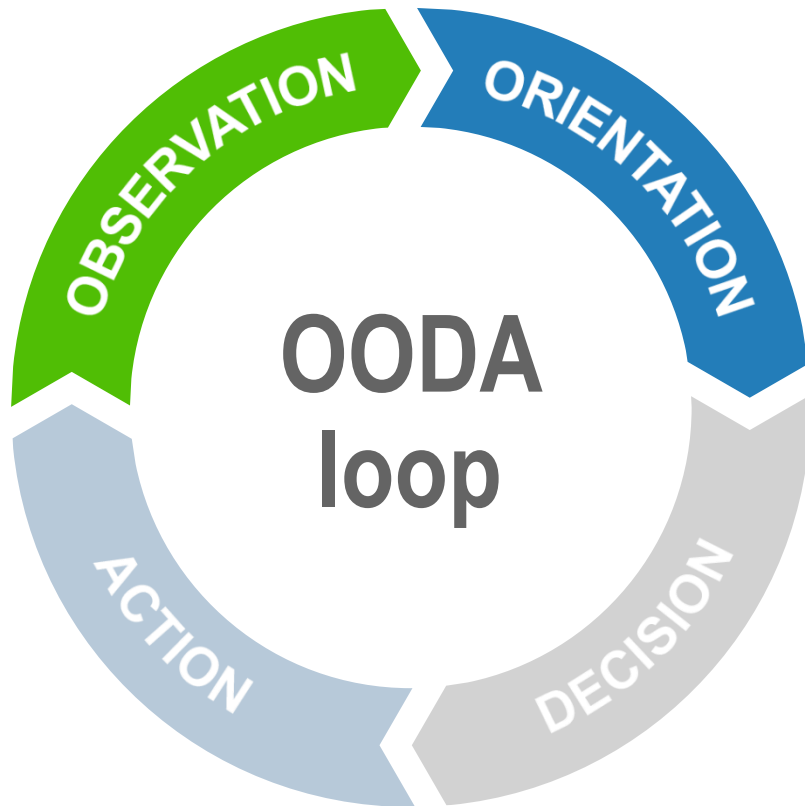
The OODA loop: Observation and Orientation



Observation: In this stage, we monitor and collect data and information about the incident environment, the affected population and available resources.

Orientation: This is sometimes called situation awareness or sense-making. In this stage, we analyse the data and turn it into information that can be used to plan what to do next.

The OODA loop: Observation and Orientation



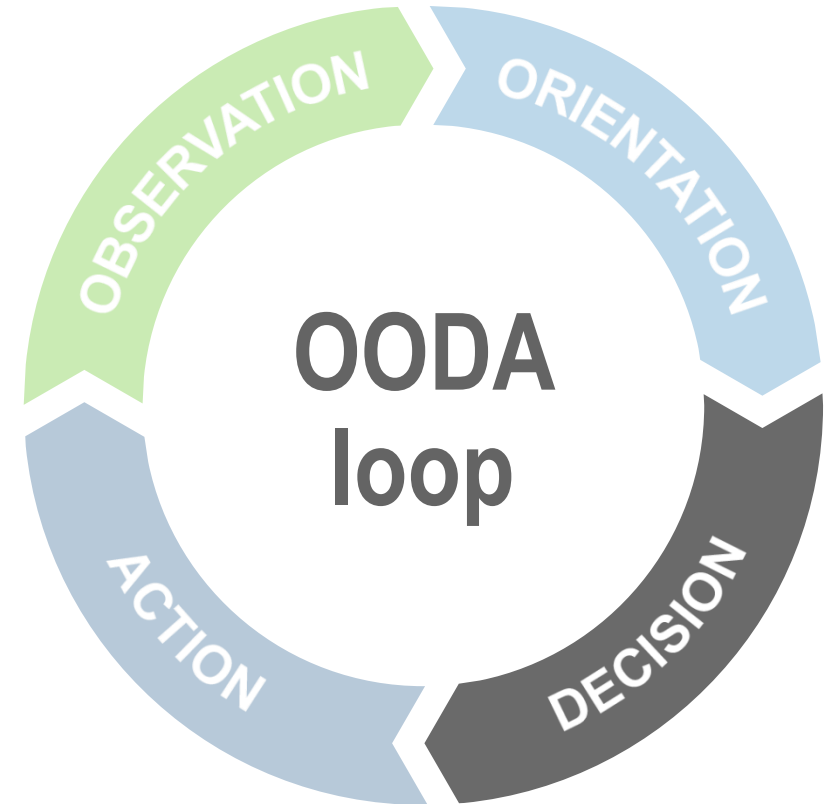
In these 2 stages we:

- get information;
- understand it; and
- think about what is going to happen next.

In the IMS, these tasks are led by the Operations and Planning functions, with input from the other functions as required.

The OODA loop: Decision

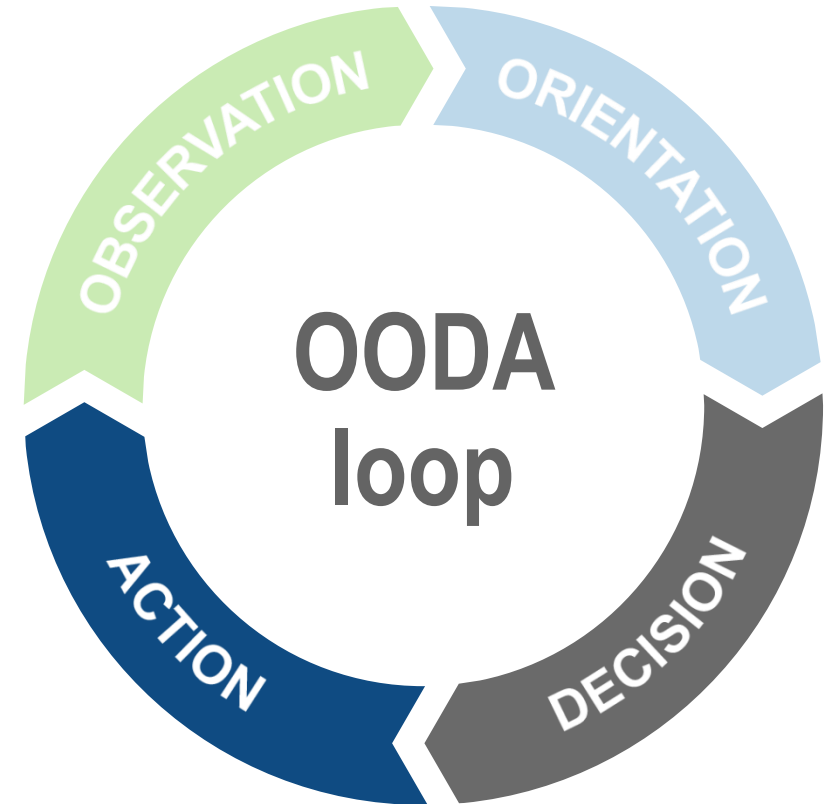
Decision: In this stage, we select an option that will contribute to the response after examining the different options available.



The OODA loop: Decision and Action

Decision: In this stage, we select an option that will contribute to the response after examining the different options available.

Action: In this stage, we put in place steps to carry out the decision we have made.

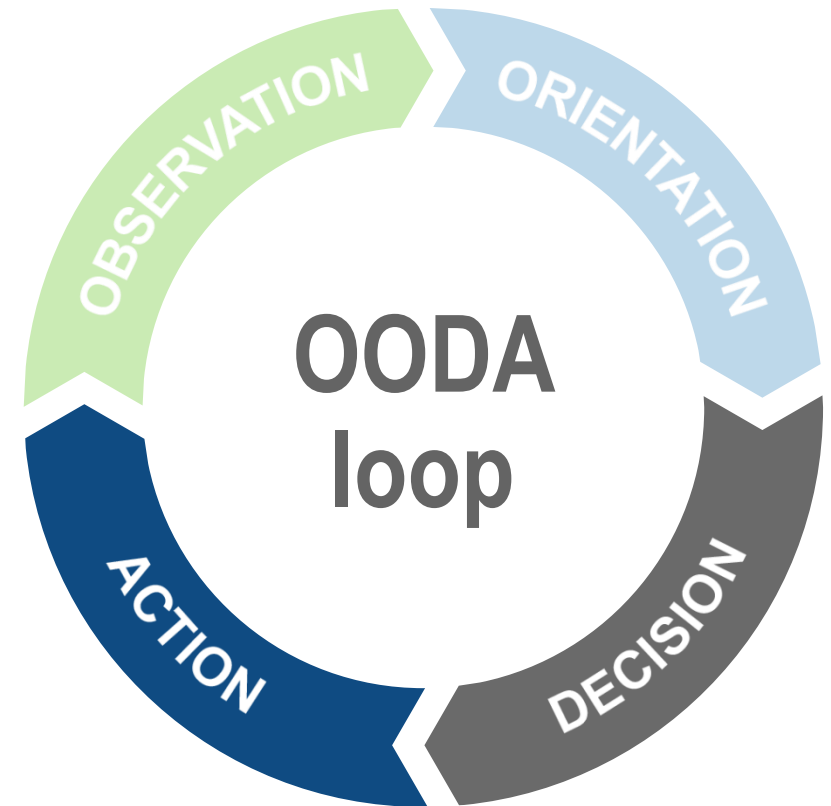


The OODA loop: Decision and Action

In the IMS, the decision-making will be done by the ultimate decision-maker: the Incident Manager. They will rely on the teamwork, advice and technical expertise of the function heads and other partners in the response.

The Act part of the decision will be carried out by the:

- Planning function, who will devise the plans; and the
- Operations function, who will deliver the response supported by the Logistics, Finance and Administration and Management functions.





SUMMARY

- The OODA loop describes how people make decisions.
- There are 4 stages in decision-making: Observe, Orient, Decide and Act.
- Emergency response is built on this decision-making process.
- The IMS is designed to help people take decisions.

“
Being aware of how
you make decisions
can also help you in
a leadership role.
”



FOLLOW-UP TASK

Think about the last big decision you made. Reflect carefully on the process you followed. Map the steps you went through to the OODA loop.

Make a note in your journal.