

Standard Operating Procedure for After-Action Review

Scope:

To establish a policy and procedure to determine when an After-Action Review (AAR) will be conducted and the format for conducting such AARs.

Purpose:

The purpose of an AAR is to capture lessons learned from an event or incident. A lesson learned is a “good work practice” or innovative approach that is captured and shared to promote repeat application. It may also be an adverse work practice or experience that is captured and shared to avoid recurrence.

Policy:

AARs can be held on any event and/or incident. However, as a minimum, an AAR should occur on all

- Security incidents and/or events that could be improved by conducting an AAR.
- Safety accidents, injuries, and/or incidents that resulted, or could have resulted in death or serious injury.
- Review of security operations, activities and events.

Procedures -What is an After-Action Review?

An AAR is a structured review process that allows the security agency to discover a security incident or event on what was supposed to happen, what actually happened, why it happened, and how it can be prevented from recurring.

Conducting an AAR can offer insights to security agencies and provide guidance for future engagements in similar efforts. Using this approach to routinely review work activities and incidents will contribute to a culture of continuous organizational learning and improvement.

How to conduct an After-Action Review.

An AAR features advanced planning, a facilitator who, ideally, is not a member of the team, and a report that captures the lesson learned.

The same framework and questions may be applied with less advanced planning and documentation as an informal AAR. The facilitator or staff who lead the AAR should read this guide carefully before scheduling the AAR session.

STEP 1. Planning an AAR

Once the Security Agency has decided to conduct an AAR, the security executive (or a responsible personnel) should schedule the session, ideally, within 1 week of event/incident. For best results, conduct the team meeting in person, rather than phone or teleconference. Ensure participation by all affected personnel. If an external facilitator is used, he/she should meet with the team leader to familiarize with the work before conducting the session. How much time should we plan for our AAR? The time you have dedicated for your AAR will depend on a

variety of factors, including the critical nature of the event or incident and the resources available to your team (including the availability of affected members). External facilitators may be more effective. They are less likely to get caught up in the content of the conversation and can encourage all personnel to participate in the conversation. If external facilitator is unavailable, a team member can fill this role. When a team member serves as a facilitator, it is important to ensure that they participate in the discussion as both facilitator and team member. Self-facilitation is a little tricky but with proper attention, it can be done successfully. Assign a team member to take notes on the flip charts. If the AAR is an hour or longer, consider having team members rotate this job so everyone can participate fully. Timekeeper: Assign time to the sections of the AAR in advance and ask someone to play the role of timekeeper (this is important - it is easy for groups to get lost in conversation and not have time to cover all sections of the review)

Organizing the AAR discussion

There are several approaches that can be used to organize the AAR discussion. The facilitator should consider the options and choose an approach before the session.

By key events, themes or issues - when there is a logical set of themes or events, it may be useful to organize an AAR discussion around them.

What was supposed to happen?

In this section, the facts of the incident must be recorded. This involves understanding what was supposed to happen in relation to the SOP.

The chronological order of events - When there is a logical choice of themes or events, a chronological review can be easy to structure and understand. It follows the flow of the action from the start to end. By covering the actions in the order that took place, participants may easily recall what happened.

Asking participants to identify unexpected results and discuss their impact and collecting data through complementary or more detailed review methods (evaluations, surveys, statistics, etc.) Simply asking, "What worked well and what didn't?"

What actually happened?

It must state the fact of the incident and all aspects and information of what happened. This includes, the actions, the conversations between parties.

STEP 2. Conducting an After-Action Review

Introducing and "setting up" the AAR - The task of the facilitator (or AAR leader) is to guide the group through a review of the project, using a standard set of questions: What was expected to happen? What actually occurred? What went well and why? What can be improved and how?

Start by reminding the team of the purpose and context of this meeting: The goal is to guide and improve the work of future teams. The AAR does not grade success or failure. There are always weaknesses to improve and strengths to sustain.

Participants should share honest observations about what actually happened (objective data) without assigning blame or praise. No one has all of the information or answers. Everybody has something important to contribute. Set an atmosphere of openness. If necessary, you can introduce ground rules or expectations for the session.

Sample ground rules for AAR Active participation: it is important for everyone to participate. Everyone's views have equal value. No blame. There are no right or wrong answers. Be open to new ideas. Be creative in proposing solutions to obstacles. "Yes....and" rather than "either/or" thinking. Consensus where possible, clarification where not. Commitment to identify opportunities for improvement and recommend possible improvement. No record of the discussion will be distributed without the agreement of all participants. Quotes will not be attributed to individuals without permission.

Guiding the AAR Discussion - This part of the meeting will be a conversation. There are two options: their perspective of what happened. Resolve inconsistencies in the story and/or fill in gaps in the story.

Why did it happen?

In this section, discussion will be made on the possible reason that caused the incident to happen. What are the elements that caused this to occur?

Facilitator tips - Give participants a couple of minutes to think about and perhaps write down their ideas before anyone speaks. To get maximum participation from the group, try going around the room to give everyone a chance to speak or asking quieter members for their ideas first. Ask participants to be specific in their statements and avoid generalizations. Summarize or repeat back to the group often. Focus on the facts. Feelings need to be acknowledged, but future recommendations have to be based on agreed facts. Ask, “what went well and why?” Always start with the good points. Ask, “What were the successful steps that were taken towards achieving your objective?” or “What went really well in the project?”

We should be seeking to build on best practice as much as we can and identifying strategies to ensure that successful practices are built into future work and repeated.

Facilitator tips - During this segment, “bad” points as well as “good” will be raised. Try not to pass judgment - it will stifle participation. Let everyone be heard and move on to the next participant or topic. If there is not enough time, a good approach will be to ask people what they feel that had the greatest impact on the success they achieved. If this has been covered, ask them to choose the next most important

factor. Ask, “What can be improved, and how?” Identify the stumbling blocks and pitfalls, so they can be avoided in the future.

The following prompts may be useful: Given the information and knowledge we had at the time, what could we have done better? Given the information and knowledge we have now, what are we going to do differently in similar situations in the future to ensure success? What would your advice be to future teams based on your experiences here?

Facilitator tips - When trying to identify the root cause of a problem or something that didn't go well, ask “why?” several times. It is important that discussions of stumbling blocks not become witch-hunts or finger pointing exercises. It is okay to let people have their say, but you may have to keep pulling them back from the problems of the past to ask “so what would you do differently next time?” Asking the probing questions and allowing the conversation to develop; or, if the team is subdued, identify the issues first and then choose the ones to work on as a team. Ask, “What was expected to happen?” Start by asking what the project team originally set out to do. Begin with the charter or other project planning documents. Encourage details. Some prompts that may be useful include: What was the purpose and objectives? Who was the audience? What was the initial timeline? Who was involved? What outcomes and outputs were intended? What products were to be produced? What barriers were expected? Ask, “What actually occurred?” It is important that participants focus on what transpired without determining what was good and bad. It is also important that full participation is encouraged. Hear their perspective of what had happened. Resolve inconsistencies in the story and/or fill in gaps in the story.

Closing the AAR Discussion - To close the AAR session; summarize key points identified during the discussion. The session should end on a positive note, linking observations to recommendations for future improvements. Let the team know what the plans for reporting are and sharing the lessons learned during the AAR. (A draft report form is included in this module) Assign roles for follow up. The supervisor and facilitator should discuss in advance the process for writing up the AAR report. Share this with the team, ask for volunteers if desired. Clarify for the team who will receive copies of the report.

STEP 3. Sharing the AAR results

How to prevent it from recurring?

The greatest benefit of an AAR comes from applying the lessons learned to future work and teams. The AAR Report Template offers a convenient format for summarizing the findings of your AAR.

There are some steps that a supervisor or a facilitator can take to increase the likelihood of having an impact on future work:

- Provide a clear summary of concrete and actionable recommendations that will improve the process.
- Identify tasks and topics that require leadership attention.
- Share the AAR report with your stakeholders or other appropriate leader in your facility.

AFTER ACTION REVIEW REPORT

Background:

1. Site Name: _____

2. Incident/Event Reviewed:

3. Date of Review: _____



4. When review was completed:

☐ During Event/Incident

☐ After Event/Event Completion

5. Participants

NAME	JOB TITLE	ROLE IN TEAM
		Security Executive

6. Please provide a summary of the event or incident on what is supposed to happen.

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7. Why did it happen?

8. What can be improved to prevent it from recurring?

(What could have been done better? What can we do differently in similar situations in the future to ensure success? What would be your advice to future project teams?)

What Can Be Improved	Recommendations