

Easy and Effective After-Action Review (AAR) Guide

After an incident, conducting an **After-Action Review (AAR)** helps teams learn from what happened, improve performance, and enhance future responses. Below is a simple yet comprehensive AAR process based on **FEMA's AAR User Guide**.

Step 1: Prepare for the AAR

- **When?** Conduct the AAR shortly after the incident (within 1-7 days).
 - **Who?** Include all key participants (responders, leadership, support staff).
 - **Where?** Choose a neutral, comfortable setting (in-person or virtual).
 - **Ground Rules:**
 - Focus on **learning**, not blame.
 - Encourage open, honest discussion.
 - Everyone's perspective matters.
-

Step 2: The 4 Key AAR Questions

1. What Was Supposed to Happen?

- Review the **objectives, plans, and expectations** before the incident.
- Example: *"What was our initial strategy? What were the expected outcomes?"*

2. What Actually Happened?

- Discuss **what occurred**, step by step, from different perspectives.
- Stick to **facts**, not opinions.
- Example: *"How did events unfold compared to the plan?"*

3. What Went Well and Why?

- Identify **successes** and **strengths**.
- Example: *"What worked? What helped us succeed?"*

4. What Can Be Improved and How?

- Discuss **challenges, gaps, and lessons learned**.
 - Focus on **actionable solutions**.
 - Example: *"What could we do differently next time?"*
-

Step 3: Document & Share Findings

- Summarize key takeaways in a simple report (1-2 pages max).
 - Include:
 - **Strengths** (to sustain)
 - **Areas for Improvement** (with recommendations)
 - **Action Items** (who will do what by when?)
-

Step 4: Follow Up

- Assign responsibility for implementing improvements.
 - Track progress in future training/exercises.
-

Quick AAR Checklist

1. Schedule the AAR after the incident.
 2. Invite the right people.
 3. Use the 4 key questions.
 4. Keep discussion constructive.
 5. Document and share lessons learned.
 6. Follow up on action items.
-

Sources:

- [FEMA AAR User Guide \(Nov 2023\)](#)