



After Action Reviews (AAR)

Purpose

In this interactive session, explore After-Action Reviews (AARs) and transform lessons into actionable insights. Gain practical techniques to facilitate meaningful reflections and improve outcomes in any project or program. Get ready to reflect, collaborate, and sharpen your evaluator mindset for greater impact!

Inspired by Partners Conversations: This workshop and the scenarios also inspired by our Partner's Grant Conversations.

	Notes
<p>Intent: What were the intended results? Consider: goals; planning; procedures; intent; anticipated outcomes</p>	
<p>Performance: What were the actual results?</p>	
<p>Learnings: What explains the difference between Performance and Intent? Consider: systemic strengths and weaknesses; obstacles; what went particularly well</p>	
<p>Change: What would you do differently in the future?</p>	

Instructions

Working in groups, discuss the scenario provided and use the After Action Review template to take notes about how you might reflect on the scenario and brainstorm actions you might take after the scenario.

We recommend designating a facilitator for the conversation, and a note-taker. The facilitator should emphasize that AARs are about learning and reflecting; it is not for fault-finding. The goal should be to develop strategies for improvement.

You will have 20 minutes for this exercise. We will spend the remaining time in the large group, sharing our experiences about the after action review and discussing what we may add to the process.

Discussion Questions

- What was your initial reaction to conducting an AAR?
- What aspects of the AAR process were easiest?
- Which were most challenging?
- Were there any assumptions that changed or perspectives that shifted during the discussion?
- What are some practical steps you can take to integrate AARs into your work?

Additional Resources

After Action Review (AAR) A basis for learning-driven improvement and a corner-stone of organizational agility - <https://nextforge.com/after-action-review-aar-a-basis-for-learning-driven-improvement-and-a-corner-stone-of-organizational-agility/>

After Action Review Guide - https://compcenternetwork.org/sites/default/files/After-Action-Review-Guide.pdf?utm_source=chatgpt.com

After Action Reports : Capturing Lessons Learned and Identifying Area of Improvement https://rems.ed.gov/docs/AfterActionReportsFactSheet_508C.pdf?utm_source=chatgpt.com

Strengthening Your Response: A Guide to Effective After Action Reports - <https://www.globalguardian.com/global-digest/after-action-reports>

After-Action Reviews: A Simple Yet Powerful Tool <https://executiveeducation.wharton.upenn.edu/thought-leadership/wharton-at-work/2021/07/after-action-reviews-simple-tool/>

Scenario 1- Lights on After School

Your afterschool program hosted a *Lights On Afterschool* event with the goal of engaging students and their families in science learning through interactive exhibits, hands-on activities, and live demonstrations. The event was widely promoted through school newsletters, flyers around the school and in the community, and Facebook, and you received about 50 RSVPs.

Scenario - Not Enough Volunteers: The event had been planned with a small number of volunteers, assuming a moderate turnout. With more families attending than expected, volunteers were overwhelmed, running from one station to another. Some stations had to be left unattended at times, and cleanup at the end of the night took longer than planned.

Scenario 2- Student Behavioral Concerns

Your after-school program serves 20 elementary and middle school students each day, providing homework support, enrichment activities, and recreational time. The goal is to create a safe, engaging, and structured environment where students can learn, socialize, and supplement the curriculum from the school day.

Assume a near-peer mentor, such as an older High School Student, is leading the activities.

Scenario - Transitions Between Activities Are Chaotic: When moving from one activity to another, some students ignore instructions, take longer than expected, or disrupt the flow. It's difficult to regain student focus after snack time, free play, or group discussions.

Scenario 3- Community Partnerships

Your after-school program has built strong relationships with local community partners to help provide space, personnel, and specialized programming for students. These partnerships have included local businesses, libraries, colleges, community centers, and nonprofits that offer staff support, enrichment activities, and resources for your program.

Scenario - Point of Contact Turnover: Every year, you host a field trip to the local Greenhouse. Historically, your point of contact has been very supportive of hosting students, and arranges various activities for students at the greenhouse, such as a venus fly trap exhibit where students can take home a plant. This year, there is a new point of contact at the greenhouse, and they are hesitant to engage with the after school program.