



## After Action Review Tip Sheet

An **After Action Review (AAR)** is designed to identify and control hazards that have resulted in an incident. They are intended as learning opportunities where workers involved in the incident meet and discuss what happened and how similar incidents can be avoided in the future.

AARs are a structured process and may include subject matter experts or managers specifically tasked with identifying areas for improvement. AARs can be either informal or formal and may depend on the severity of the incident that occurred.

1. **Informal AARs** are normally reserved for small workplaces and for when there is no specific need or resources to conduct a more formal review. They share many of the same advantages and methods of a debriefing (Note: see tip sheet), especially because they are conducted by the people involved and everyone participates. **Nevertheless, they are more structured than a debriefing and often have specific objectives and examine issues more thoroughly.** Consequently, informal AARs may extend over several days or weeks.
2. **Formal AARs** are usually conducted by larger organizations in examining complex issues and may take several months. They routinely have both an agenda and a schedule. Furthermore, they are tightly focused and are often limited in scope and require a written report.

### Purpose/Benefits of AARs

- They focus on **solutions** to a safety issue rather than blaming individuals.
- They focus on **learning** from issues to reduce further risk to staff and persons being supported.
- They give people a chance to speak about critical situations **without blame**.
- They provide an opportunity for front-line workers to **participate** in gathering information, decision-making, and strategizing.
- AARs are professional forums, not opportunities for participants to complain about issues that cannot be influenced by the people involved.
- Identify **lessons learned**: Knowledge and experience, positive or negative, derived from actual incidents.
- Share **best practices**: Exemplary, procedures, good ideas, or solutions that work and are solidly grounded in actual experiences and training.

- Discuss **good stories**: Exemplary, but non-peer-validated, initiatives (i.e. implemented by other workplaces) that have shown success in their specific environments and that may provide useful information to other communities and organizations.

**Content to guide an AAR:**

1. Based on the incident that occurred, discuss the top 3 strengths and/or areas that need improvement.

---

---

---

---

2. Discuss issues identified that those directly involved might not have been able to experience, observe, and record?

---

---

---

---

3. Outlines the corrective actions that should be taken to address the hazard and discuss how they will be prioritized (i.e. high, medium, or low )and why.

---

---

---

---

4. Describe the corrective actions related to areas of responsibility. Who is assigned responsibility for each corrective action?

---

---

---

---

5. Discuss the applicable equipment, training, policies, plans, and procedures that will be reviewed, revised, or developed. Indicate the priority level for each.

---

---

---

---

## What is the written format of an After Action Review?

There is no standard format for recording lessons learned but there is a common format applied for debriefings and informal AARs. It is popular because it is simple, clear and easy to understand. It originated with the military services, and referred to by its initials, **IDR**, which stands **for item, discussion and recommendation**.

The IDR format is a simple, three-step process for identifying and describing issues, items or ideas with their related recommendations.

1. The **item**, issue or idea step identifies the particular subject and provides a description of the concern. It also serves as the title of the subject and as such is normally just a few words and never longer than a single sentence.
2. The **discussion** is a short summary explaining why the concern is relevant. It provides sufficient information to convince an uninformed reader of how the problem was manifested and in what circumstances and context. When more than one contributory cause is identified, they are all listed if they can be addressed by a single recommendation. The discussion component may be several paragraphs to as long as a single page. Those items that require longer explanations and descriptions are normally reserved for more formal reports.
3. The **recommendation** is the last step and is a short statement suggesting a corrective course of action, countermeasure or remedy.