

# Safety Climate Tool after-action review

## Introduction

The after-action review (AAR) is a straightforward exercise for capturing all the useful knowledge you'll have gained from carrying out your first Safety Climate Tool survey. First used by the USA military to debrief personnel after combat training exercises, AARs have found their way into the corporate world where they are used to learn lessons from major projects.

This isn't a prescriptive process and it can be adapted to suit your needs. It shouldn't be viewed as a post-mortem; neither should it be used to apportion blame. AARs are to help you learn from your experience so your organisation can get the maximum benefit from future surveys.

## Conducting an after-action review

### Step 1

You should arrange to bring your steering group together when you're ready to carry out an evaluation.

You'll need to set some ground rules for the AAR because it involves people with different levels of authority in your organisation. These should include:

- Everyone has an equal role to play in the AAR regardless of role or seniority.
- The AAR is about learning through taking part.
- Everyone has a 'voice'.
- The AAR is not about success or failure; rather about building on what worked well and improving what worked less well.

### Step 2

Ask the questions in the table.

<p><b>What was supposed to happen?</b> E.g. activities, approaches, techniques</p>	<p><b>What actually happened? (Summary of recent events)</b> What are the facts?</p>
<p><b>Why did this happen?</b> Look for the root causes.</p>	<p><b>What lessons can be learned from the experience?</b> What is the ideal process? What are the actions arising?</p>

If you've used HSE's five-stage approach (Foundation, Analyse, Focus, Act, Evaluate) to assess and improve your safety culture you may wish to organise your AAR using each heading.

Examples of the types of questions you could ask include:

- What was the objective of running the survey?
- What was your plan?
- How did this change?
- What went well and why?
- What could have gone better?
- What advice would you give yourself if you could go back to where you were at the start of the project?
- What were the two or three key lessons you would share with others?

### Step 3

If you're likely to make changes to who takes part in the steering group for subsequent surveys (see Steering group rules of engagement) you may wish to capture the key lessons from this session. This way they can form part of a briefing document for future steering groups.

For support on interpreting your Safety Climate Tool survey and/or Stress Indicator Tool survey results, advice on next steps and engaging with staff on safety please contact [ascent@hse.gov.uk](mailto:ascent@hse.gov.uk). Contact us to discuss how your results could be used to progress towards safety culture excellence using HSE's ASCENT framework.

### Further reading

Nick Milton, *The Lessons Learned Handbook: A Practical Knowledge-Based Approach to Learning from Experience*. Chandos Publishing, 2010. ISBN 978 1 84 334587 9