

Lesson Overview

This lesson explains the process of identifying, implementing, and tracking corrective actions in a continual cycle of improvement.

Lesson Objectives

After completing this lesson, you will be able to:

- Describe how participants in the After Action Conference generate corrective actions.
- Describe guidelines for implementing and tracking corrective actions through a Corrective Action Program (CAP).

This lesson should take approximately 40 minutes to complete.

Identifying Improvements to Be Implemented In the Exercise Evaluation And Improvement Process

Identifying Improvements to be Implemented is the sixth step in the exercise evaluation and improvement planning process.

Generating Corrective Actions

As you learned in Lesson 6, much of the After Action Conference is devoted to developing the Improvement Plan (IP) matrix. The IP matrix lists corrective actions associated with each recommendation on the After Action Report/Improvement Plan (AAR/IP).

Each corrective action should identify what will be done to address the recommendation; who (person or agency) should be responsible; and a timeframe for implementation.

A corrective action should contain enough detail to make it useful.

Questions to consider. The following questions should guide the development of corrective actions:

- What changes need to be made to plans and procedures to improve performance?
- What changes need to be made to organizational structures to improve performance?
- What changes need to be made to leadership and management processes to improve performance?
- What training is needed to improve performance?
- What changes to (or additional) equipment are needed to improve performance?
- What lessons can be learned that will direct how to approach a similar problem in the future?

Generating Corrective Actions (Continued)

Some After Action Report/Improvement Plan (AAR/IP) recommendations will lead to clear corrective actions that can be defined at the After Action Conference. Other corrective actions cannot be identified without additional information. For these items, the IP matrix should specify at least the first step in the process.

Each corrective action should be assigned to the organization that is best qualified to execute it. It is important that organizations are assigned corrective actions that they have the authority to carry out.

Note: The IP may be driven by the exercise planners, but it will be carried out by the organizations that participated in the exercise. For that reason, participating organizations must fully support the IP, especially its sections on assigning responsibility and establishing timelines for completion. In short, the development of the IP should be a stakeholder-driven process.

Corrective Actions: Working Within Limited Resources

Some corrective actions will require resources for training, equipment, or personnel. The Improvement Plan (IP) should establish realistic priorities for the use of limited resources. For example, some action items may require steps such as submitting an application for additional funding, or seeking an agreement to share resources with a neighboring jurisdiction.

When resources are not immediately available, exercise planners and evaluators should develop short- and long-term solutions for improving the capability in question. In this situation, the IP is considered complete even if it only details the short-term steps for improvement.

Benchmarking Corrective Actions

Corrective actions must include attainable benchmarks that will allow the jurisdiction to measure progress towards their implementation.

Examples of benchmarks include the following:

- The number of personnel trained in a task.
- The percentage of equipment that is up-to-date.
- The finalization of an interagency agreement within a given amount of time.

These benchmarks should be defined against concrete deadlines so the jurisdiction can track gradual progress toward implementation.

Finalizing the After Action Report/Improvement Plan (IP)

Finalizing the After Action Report/Improvement Plan (IP) is the seventh step in the exercise evaluation and improvement planning process.

Finalizing the After Action Report/Improvement Plan (IP)

After the After Action Conference, the Exercise Planning and Evaluation Teams finalize the After Action Report/Improvement Plan (AAR/IP) by incorporating corrections, clarifications, and other participant feedback into the final plan.

The AAR/IP is then distributed to members of the Exercise Planning Team for validation. The Exercise Planning Team will assess whether the AAR/IP is an accurate document that meets the exercise objectives.

Finalizing the After Action Report/Improvement Plan (IP) (Continued)

When validating the After Action Report/Improvement Plan (AAR/IP), the Exercise Planning Team ensures that the AAR/IP addresses the needs of participating jurisdictions. It also ensures that AAR/IP is a useful tool to guide the following areas:

- Strategy development.
- Exercise program planning.
- Sharing of lessons learned with homeland security community partners.
- Changes to plans, policies, and procedures.
- Capability development and refinement.
- Efforts to focus limited resources upon improvements in preparedness.

Once the AAR/IP is validated, it is considered final. To protect potentially sensitive information, the Exercise Planning Team should agree on the AAR/IP distribution list before issuing the final version.

Applying Lessons Learned

Among other uses, the finalized AAR/IP serves as a tool to share and apply lessons across jurisdictions.

As you learned in Lesson 5, lessons learned are centralized on the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) Lessons Learned Information Sharing portal (LLIS.gov). LLIS allows members of the nationwide response community to learn about, read, submit, and comment on lessons learned.

Tracking Implementation

The corrective actions captured in the After Action Report/Improvement Plan (AAR/IP) should be tracked and continually reported on. This process is referred to as a Corrective Action Program (CAP).

Tracking implementation of corrective actions is the eighth step in the exercise evaluation and improvement planning process.

Tracking Implementation

To track the implementation of corrective actions, each participating jurisdiction should have points of contact (POC) responsible for tracking corrective actions and reporting on their progress.

Jurisdictions are not expected to have dedicated staff members for these POC positions. Instead, these duties can be assigned to current homeland security exercise and emergency response personnel.

POC positions include:

- **Event Points-of-Contact.** A successful exercise program must have a designated Event Point-of-Contact (POC). This person is responsible for continuously tracking implementation of the corrective actions assigned to the jurisdiction in the After Action Report/Improvement Plan (AAR/IP).

The Event POC serves as the central POC for exercise improvements. In this capacity, he or she is responsible for compiling updates on corrective actions into periodic progress reports. In this way, the Event POC executes a Corrective Action Program (CAP).

- **Jurisdiction Points-of-Contact.** Each participating jurisdiction should identify a Jurisdiction Point of Contact (POC). This person is responsible for managing the corrective actions assigned to the jurisdiction, as well as for assigning action officers to complete individual corrective actions.

The Jurisdiction POC should collect information from assigned action officers on the progress of corrective actions. After compiling this information, he or she should provide regular progress updates to the Event POC.

- **Action Officers.** Action Officers are assigned to complete individual corrective actions. They provide regular status updates to the Jurisdiction POC and/or program manager.

The Action Officer's reports track progress on the benchmarks associated with each corrective action. These benchmarks were identified in the After Action Report/Improvement Plan (AAR/IP). Failure to achieve these benchmarks should also be reported, in order to enhance accountability.

The Action Officers' updates are compiled to produce progress reports on the status of all corrective actions identified in the AAR/IP.

By assigning POCs to track corrective actions, a jurisdiction engages in a Corrective Action Program (CAP) that continually improves priority capabilities.

Continual Improvement and the Corrective Action Program

Exercises are part of a wider preparedness cycle that includes planning, training, equipment purchases, and personnel.

The implementation of corrective actions listed in an After Action Report/Improvement Plan (AAR/IP) is the way exercises inform and improve other components of the preparedness cycle.

The progress reports issued by a jurisdiction's points-of-contact should illustrate a consistent trend of progress towards the implementation of corrective actions. Because the AAR/IP ties corrective actions to specific capabilities, progress reports ultimately demonstrate the concrete ways that exercises enhance capabilities.

Once participating jurisdictions have implemented corrective actions, a new cycle of exercise activities can begin.

Lesson Summary

In this lesson you learned:

Participants in the After Action Conference generate corrective actions.

Corrective actions must include attainable benchmarks that will allow the jurisdiction to measure progress towards their implementation.

Examples of benchmarks include the following:

- The number of personnel trained in a task.
- The percentage of equipment that is up-to-date.
- The finalization of an interagency agreement within a given amount of time.

The final After Action Report/Improvement Plan (AAR/IP) is used for the following:

- Strategy development.
- Exercise program planning.
- Sharing of lessons learned with homeland security community partners.
- Changes to plans, policies, and procedures.
- Capability development and refinement.
- Efforts to focus limited resources upon improvements in preparedness.

The corrective actions captured in the AAR/IP should be tracked and continually reported on. This process is referred to as a Corrective Action Program (CAP).

Each corrective action should be assigned to the organization that is best qualified to execute it. It is important that organizations are assigned corrective actions that they have the authority to carry out.

To track the implementation of corrective actions, each participating jurisdiction should assign points of contact (POC).

POC positions include:

- Event Points-of-Contact
- Jurisdiction Points-of-Contact
- Action Officers

Once participating jurisdictions have implemented corrective actions, a new cycle of exercise activities can begin.