

Tips for Evaluating Exercise Performance

Overall Tips

- Follow the HSEEP Exercise Evaluation Guidelines that help evaluators compare the exercise objectives to the actual observations and results.
- Schedule an After-Action Review (AAR) as soon after the incident as possible.
- Keep it short and focused.
- Focus on WHAT, not WHO.
- Establish clear ground rules: encourage candor and openness (this is dialog—not lecture or debate); focus on items that can be fixed; keep all discussions confidential.
- Use a skilled facilitator to conduct the AAR.

AAR Process Steps

Use the following questions to facilitate the AAR process:

1. What did we set out to do?
 - Establish the facts.
 - Determine purpose of the mission and definition of success:
 - Identify the skills from the Target Capabilities List (TCL) on which the exercise was to focus (e.g., communications, mass care, onsite incident management)
 - Identify key tasks involved.
 - Specify conditions under which each task may need to be performed (weather, topography, time restrictions, etc.).
 - Define acceptable standards for success (explain what “Right” looks like).
2. What actually happened?
 - Continue to establish the facts.
 - Participants should come to agreement on what actually happened.
 - Pool multiple perspectives to build a shared picture of what happened.
3. Why did it happen?
 - Analyze cause and effect.
 - Focus on WHAT, not WHO.
 - Provide progressive refinement for drawing out explanations of what occurred. This will lead into developing possible solutions.
4. What are we going to do better next time?
 - Solutions will arise naturally once problems are identified and understood.
 - Focus on items you can fix, rather than external forces outside of your control.
 - Identify areas where groups are performing well and that should be sustained. This will help repeat success and create a balanced approach to the AAR.
 - Areas To Sustain/Maintain Strengths:
 - Areas To Improve Weaknesses:

Tips for Evaluating Exercise Performance (Continued)

AAR Process Steps (Continued)

5. Are there lessons learned that should be shared immediately?
 - Identify the process for sharing lessons learned.
 - Option 1: Document the Issue, Discussion, Recommendation
 - Option 2: Document the Concept of the Operation, Results, Trends, Recommendation
 - Determine and describe the most notable successes from the incident.
 - Determine and describe the most difficult challenges faced and how they were overcome.

6. What followup is needed?
 - Be specific about actions, timelines, and responsibilities.
 - What changes, additions, or deletions are recommended to SOPs, plans, or training?
 - What issues were not resolved to your satisfaction and need further review?