# TOOL BEFORE & AFTER ACTION REVIEW

## OVERVIEW

Before and After Action Review (BAR-AAR) is a reflection tool to promote Emergent Learning and helps groups of people strengthen their ability to think about and learn from their work, to consistently achieve or exceed desired outcomes, even in the midst of unpredictable challenges.

The BAR-AAR tool lives in a larger set of tools called Emergent Learning. At it's simplest, Emergent Learning uses four steps to collect data and information, learn from the results, set up new hypotheses, and identify opportunities to test them out.
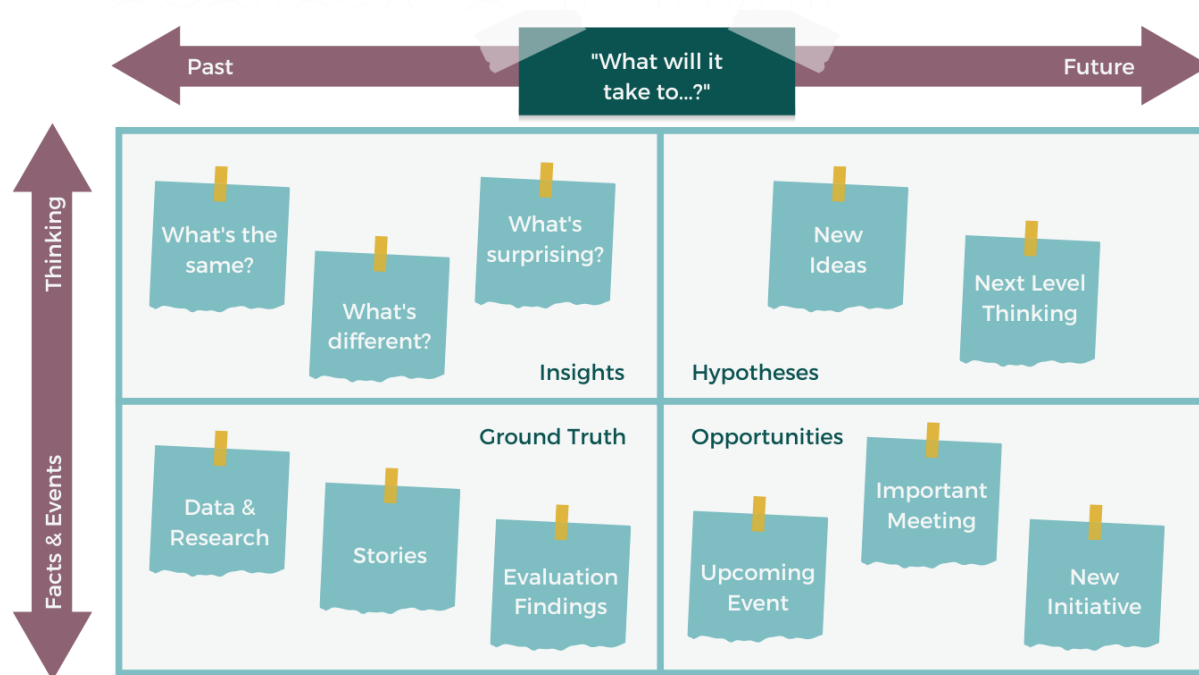


## WHEN TO USE

Use this tool before a planned action, meeting, event, or project to identify the intended outcomes and results, and the activities you will use to get to the intended results and any anticipated challenges and past learning. Use this same tool after an action, meeting, event, or project to identify the actual results and what to sustain in the future and what to improve. This is an excellent tool for debriefing.

# BAR-AAR WORKSHEET

| BEFORE ACTION REVIEW | AFTER ACTION REVIEW |
|---|---|
| **Date of BAR:**<br>**BAR Participants**: | **Date of AAR:**<br>**AAR Participants:** |
| What are our intended results? | What were our actual results? |
| What will that look like? | What caused these results? |
| What challenges might we encounter? | What will we sustain or improve? *If we could turn back the clock, what we have done differently?* |
| What have we learned from similar situations? | Sustain |
| What will make us successful this time? | Improve |
| Date of our AAR *[copy to top of next column]:* | When is our next opportunity to test what we have learned? |
| | Date of next BAR? |

LEARN

## HOW TO USE

Research and experience show that organizations that learn and grow from each step in their process are more effective and adaptable.  Creating a sense of learning with each approach allows groups to set clear intentions to achieve results and fosters a curiosity to continually learn from each action.  This shifts the focus away from what is "right and wrong" to a focus on what works and what can we learn and do better to best meet our objectives.  Planning before and after actions or events helps clarify the purpose of the meeting.  First meet with project partners prior to the event and ask the questions on the tool about intended results, what the action will look like and any challenges and any similar situations we have learned from and identify what will make the action successful.  This a chance to set a hypothesis for each outcome: if we use a certain tactic, we expect a specific outcome.

Debriefing after an event is a way to learn valuable tactics and be able to identify ways we could adapt or change going forward.  Emergent learning happens through reflection, planning and adaptation. Bring the planning group together after the event to debrief. Use the tool again during the debrief from the activity to discuss what actually happened, what was learned, and what will work in the future and any changes that the group will try going forward. The next time the group designs an event or activity together reflect on what worked and what you will try again.

This is an iterative process for each step along the way to achieving your outcomes.  It is important to identify your next steps in both the BAR and the AAR as part of the process of creating a culture of continuous learning and to keep the work adaptive.  The emergent learning cycle is to plan, act, reflect, adjust, and integrate learning into the next plan.

## COMMUNITY LEARNING MODEL

### *Learn*

Set goals and use measures to test the impact and quality of actions; learn from experiences and translate that information into more effective actions. Actors remain accountable to a shared vision and "return learning to the system" as a mutual contribution.

BAR-AAR is a tool for the Learn phase of the Community Learning Model. To learn more about tools for dialogue and the other areas of the Community Learning Model, visit [civiccanopy.org/clm](http://civiccanopy.org/clm).

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