After Action Review

Purpose

Reflection tool for recording and leveraging key initiative learnings

Who this is for

- Project Leads
- Team Members (use for learning, reflection, documentation)

When to use

Closing the initiative

Considering renewal or scaling

Researching and learning

Introduction

Why is this toolkit important?

Projects produce learnings. Reflecting upon, recording, and then subsequently using those learnings creates a powerful source of institutional knowledge that new initiatives can use as a foundation.

Key actions

- Practice having a review conversation at project end to reflect and record what was done and what was learned

- Incorporate review of after-action learnings into initiation practices for new initiatives to leverage and benefit from continuity

How to use this toolkit

As the name suggests, most steps to use this tool are completed at the conclusion of the initiative – save for one. Once a practice of recording after-action reviews has become part of a team's routine, one of the first steps in starting a new initiative is to review the learnings from similar past initiatives. These learnings are encapsulated in summaries completed during the after-action review.

💡 **Tip**

This tool is closely aligned with the Project Charter Template; its sections mirror the structure of the Project Charter Template. However, it can also be used as a standalone tool in place of a full charter, such as when retrofitting an ongoing initiative into a newly implemented knowledge structuring routine.

Tools overview

There are 4 tools in this toolkit. They can be used individually or in combination as needed.

Intended vs. Actual Outcomes

A results-oriented review exercise to reflect on how actual outcomes compare to initial intentions.

Go to tool →

Project Findings & Recommendations

A deeper set of considerations for reflecting on the learnings from an initiative after its completion.

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Project Closeout Checklist

A list meant to ensure that everyone who needs to review the initiative's deliverables has done so – and to ensure that those who need to be kept in the loop are informed of the initiative's findings and completion.

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One Page Executive Summary

Summary of key goals, outcomes, lessons learned, and further information on an initiative that is compiled at the end of a project or used at the start of similar subsequent initiatives.

Go to tool →

Related

Next steps

- Institutions evolve over time, and understanding past initiatives helps shape future goals. Use this tool to map your journey and spark discussions about your direction: Transformation Timeline.