

Lessons Management Guidance

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Introduction

Lessons learned from incidents and exercises are a key part of preventing and reducing the impact of future events. Capturing these lessons may involve updating policies and procedures, enhancing training programs, or investing in new equipment and technology to mitigate risk. Lessons management supports the sharing of these experiences and the changes that accompany them.

The Counter Terrorism Preparedness Network (CTPN) is a collaborative network of strategic leaders, practitioners, and academics that informs city-level policies and practices across Europe, North America, and Australasia which has informed this document. This guidance also utilised the Australian Institute for Disaster Resilience's Lessons Management Handbook and was further informed by the lessons work at the UK Cabinet Office Emergency Planning College.

Purpose

This document offers cities a simple guide on the identification, management, and implementation of lessons. This is a critical process to build capabilities that reduce the likelihood and impact of terrorism.

This guidance is primarily aimed at emergency services, through a set of principles that follow the lessons cycle and associated processes. It inherently promotes the need for continuous improvement.

Lesson Identified versus Lesson Learnt

A 'lesson identified' is a positive or negative experience that is accompanied by an analysis and clear course of action. A 'lesson learnt' is a demonstrated change in behaviour that results from a previously identified and learned lesson. A lesson is only learned when the change in behaviour is measurable.

However, the term lesson learnt can also be used to describe raw observations or options without any validation or analysis. Not all issues that emerge during and after operations and exercises are lessons that can be learnt. Rather, these issues provide information that can be collectively reviewed to determine the most salient positive or negative experiences arising. Taking the time to review issues in this way is important to ensure that lessons identified are well communicated and evidenced.

How to Succeed in Lessons Management – An Infrastructure for Success

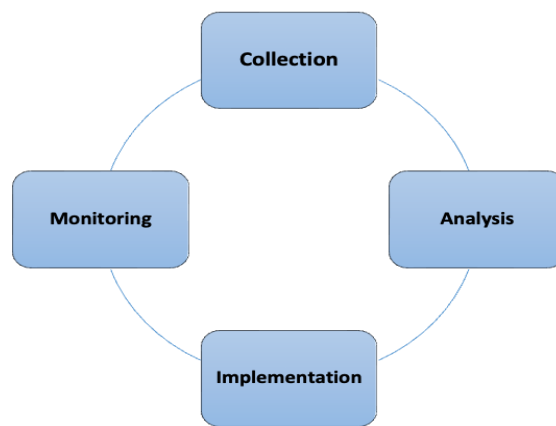
Every organisation should have a support structure with the following aspects:

- **Change Management.** This will be different for each organisation, but it's an integral part of lessons management. There must be a structured approach for embedding lessons into an organisation's processes and the wider multi-agency arrangements where relevant.
- **Organisational Learning.** Successful organisational learning occurs when the senior leaders of each organisation create a culture that identifies, learns, and prioritises lessons.
- **Governance and Leadership.** Clear governance structures ensure the necessary oversight and accountability to deliver change. Leadership should foster a culture of responsibility towards learning that can enable lessons to be implemented across their organisation and city.

Lessons Management Cycle

There are four key steps in the lessons management cycle:

1. Collection
2. Analysis
3. Implementation
4. Monitoring and review



Collection

Observations should be collected from the following sources:

- Activities such as observing an actual event, exercise, or training activity.
- Interviews with, or submissions by, key personnel and stakeholders.
- Analysis of reports, articles, documents, and reviews.
- Capturing experiences from real-time events or incidents. As soon after the incident as possible, arrangements for collecting observations should be made. This is a time-consuming but integral part of the process and will lead to a high number of observations.
- Debriefs/post-event reviews including surveys and questionnaires. These are important in collecting perspectives and experiences from different people involved in the event.

Analysis

During the analysis stage, collected data is reviewed for trends or themes that an organisation would find useful. These go on to define lessons and opportunities which will be used to amend and improve their organisational processes and response to incidents. This will, in turn, inform possible solutions, strategy development, and options for implementation.

Observations are based on individual perceptions and may include personal opinions. The goal of the analysis is to identify the *factual evidence* underlying these perceptions and identify the root causes of the situation. To support lesson identification, additional insights from interviews or group debriefs – for example – can be considered during analysis. Together, the information can be used for:

- **Data triangulation.** Grouping similar observations from multiple sources such as interviews, observed behaviours, and documents.
- **Data labelling/coding.** Once several observations have been identified, they can be themed. Similar observations are then grouped together and used to inform the development of insights, which are then analysed to determine their causal factors.
- **Data interpretation.** Analysing and overlaying factual evidence to identify the pattern or trend that summarises the root cause. Insights may be adjusted because of root cause analysis and/or subject matter expert validation.

These become the lessons identified that should be prioritised for implementation.

Implementation

Implementation should have an action plan which includes the monitoring, review, and reporting on lessons learnt within a clear governance structure. Sharing lessons and prioritising information are both important for a successful implementation plan. Sharing lessons within and between organisations ensures everyone benefits from the knowledge gained. This may result in a plan handling

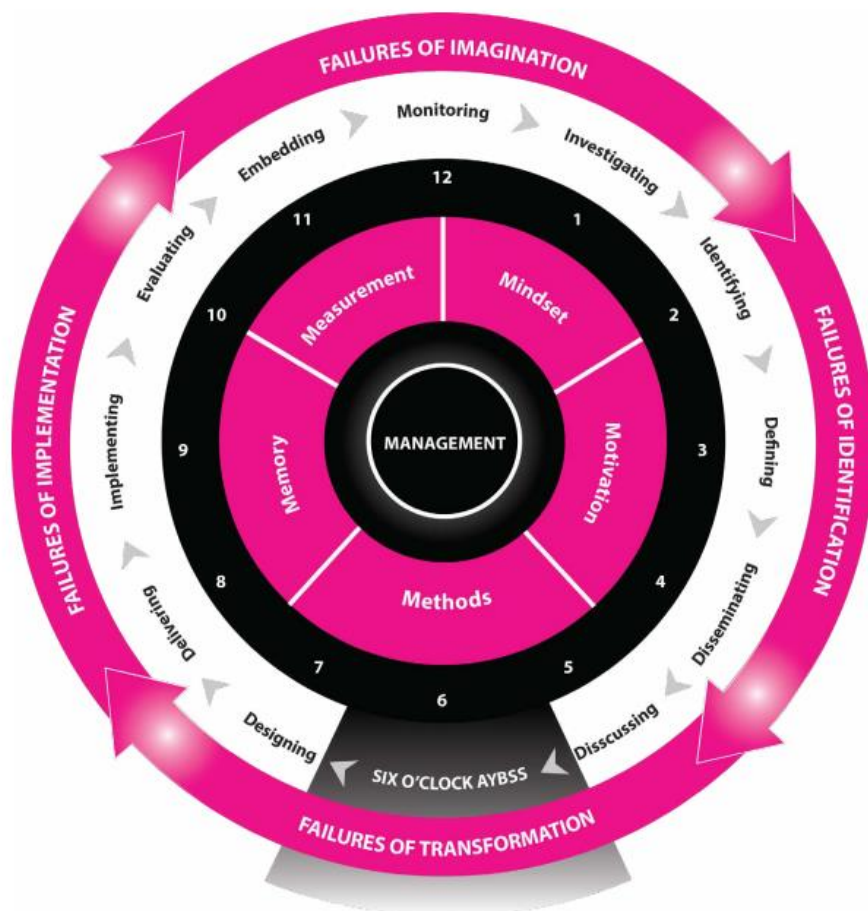
both classified and unclassified material. It is equally important to regularly check in with stakeholders and not wait until an implementation plan has been fully developed. This ensures agreement at the development stage from senior leaders or stakeholders. The implementation phase also needs:

- **Executive level support.** This is critical for successful implementation.
- **Organisational support and commitment.** Gaining commitment from the people within the organisation is vital to the success of the model because acceptance of the change ideally comes from both top down and bottom up.
- **Clear understanding.** Lessons that are complex or difficult to act on should be shared and explained to ensure transparency, joint understanding, and a joint approach.
- **Engaging others in lessons implementation.** A collaborative approach to encourage changes in practice is a key aspect of implementing lessons.
- **Communication with the target audience.** Communication should take place throughout the work of the implementation plan with key stakeholders, both internally and externally.

Many implementation plans are instigated and owned by emergency services. However, for wider multi-agency arrangements there also needs to be a city-wide approach and implementation plan.

Monitoring and Review

Monitoring the outcomes of lessons identified is crucial to evaluating the success of implementation activities as illustrated below. Implementation may be validated through exercises, training, and operational activity. This should be an ongoing component of lessons management and governance.



Roast, 2021. Learning that can save lives.

Appendix: Tips and Notes

Writing Good Observations

When writing observations, use prompting questions to fill out the details.

- **Who** gave the observation? What is their position, role, or agency? Avoid using names of the person being observed as the purpose is not to identify or blame.
- **When** did the event occur? Was it an attack/incident, part of a project, or during an exercise? This gives context to the circumstances and timeline.
- **What** occurred? What was seen, heard, or felt? What were the impacts?

Observations must be clear and understandable even if removed from all other contexts.

To ensure an observation can stand on its own:

- Be clear and concise.
- Limit to only one idea per observation.
- Write in plain English.
- Identify positions and roles but avoid using names.
- Spell out abbreviations and acronyms.
- Avoid using field-specific jargon.
- Be descriptive and include examples when possible.

Warnings about Language

Organisations and individuals use terms and techniques in their own way; these can be inconsistent and interchangeably used. Be aware that one organisation's terminology will not necessarily match the terminology of another agency.

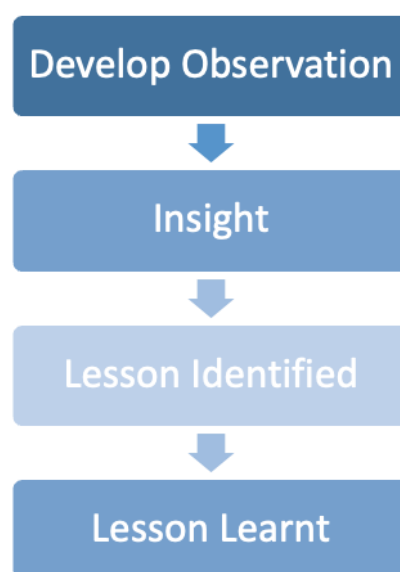
The OILL Process

Once individual observations have been collected, they need to be analysed for insights and to identify what the lessons are for an organisation. This stage helps to ascertain if an observation reflects a random occurrence or anomaly, rather than a systemic gap in performance to be addressed.

One approach to ascertaining observations, analysing for insights, and identifying lessons is known as the OILL Process. It stands for Observation, Insight, Lesson Identified, and Lesson Learnt. This approach is widely used by military organisations, emergency services, and private sector organisations.

Observation: A record of a noteworthy fact or occurrence that someone has heard, noticed, or experienced as good practice or an opportunity for improvement.

Insight: Deductions leading to clarity and understanding of the issue, drawn from multiple observations. Generally, a minimum of three observations (from multiple sources) should be used for an insight, although an insight may be developed when a single observation poses a high risk to the organisation. Insights can be positive or negative and



contribute to reinforcing positive behaviour or changing practices. An insight defines the issue, not the solution.

Lesson Identified: A lesson consists of knowledge or understanding gained by experience. The experience may be positive (a good practice) or negative (a gap in performance or doctrine). A lesson identified is the formation of an evidence-based conclusion with an identifiable cause. This informs a course of action that either maintains the identified good practice or addresses a gap.

Lesson Learnt: A lesson is only learnt once the agreed change is implemented and embedded in the organisation. Depending on the changes required, it may take several years for the change to be institutionalised and demonstrated across the organisation or a multi-agency partnership.

Barriers to Implementation

An effective lessons management process ensures that lessons are institutionalised and practised. However, barriers often prohibit an organisation from effectively implementing a successful lessons management process. These include a lack of leadership authority and commitment to the learning process; poor data and inadequate resources; or concern that implementing change will be an admission that earlier practice was negligent and lead to liability.

The following steps can be taken to improve the effectiveness of the lesson's management process:

- **Testing and Exercising.** One of the most valuable methods to implement change is to practice. Annual testing and exercising plans should accompany implementation plans. These events can be variable in scale, from tabletop exercises to full scale live exercise, single agency, and single theme, ranging to multi agency and multi themed. If there is a change to process, there may be a knowledge training requirement to compliment the training and exercising plan. A training plan will need to be developed and delivered.
- **Communication.** If policies and procedures are changed, there must also be a communication plan in place to inform all the relevant staff who follow these documents.

Sensitive Issues

There will be times when the lessons management process leads to the disclosure of sensitive information that may pertain to personal, ethical, or safety issues. The process needs to be aware of the organisation's policies and procedures to handle these.

Legal Issues

Any event that results in a death will be followed by a legal investigation. Coronial inquiries or similar, should be seen as another tool for the collection of observations and as an independent analysis of the response and outcomes to any event. They should be seen as complementing and assisting, not substituting for a lessons management process.