



Australian Government

Australian Civil-Military Centre



A Whole-of-Government Lesson Management Framework

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1. Introduction

1. Australia's response to disasters and conflicts has developed over the last 20 years. The Australian Government is repeatedly called on to assist affected countries respond to conflict and natural disasters within our region.
2. As identified in the Guiding Principles for Civil-Military Police Interaction in International Disaster and Conflict Management 2015, capturing and communicating whole-of-government lessons is essential to building effective multiagency capability and improves our national response to domestic and international disasters and conflicts.¹
3. Interagency operational effectiveness reflects the practices and processes of the agencies involved. Continuous improvement through the integration of lessons outcomes into planning, training, exercises, and policy enhances future integrated whole-of-government operations.²

1.1 Purpose

4. The purpose of this document is to provide an Australian whole-of-government lessons management framework (the Framework). The Framework recognises the capabilities of individual agencies and the varying approaches to lessons management.
5. The Framework provides whole-of-government organisations with an approach to lessons management that can be adapted to develop and enhance their own lessons and evaluation capability. It supports organisations undertaking whole-of-government lessons activities and promotes a coordinated approach to improving interagency operational effectiveness and reducing risk.
6. The Framework highlights the importance of consistent lesson and evaluation programs, the value of capturing lessons from whole-of-government crises and conflict responses and encourages organisational learning and memory.
7. The core lesson values, principles and processes of this framework are informed by other lesson management frameworks including:
 - 2019 Australian Institute for Disaster Resilience Lessons Management Handbook
 - 2015 Emergency Management Victoria EM-LEARN Framework
 - 2020 Australian Maritime Safety Authority Lessons Management Approach
 - 2020 Department of Defence Lessons Handbook
 - 2018 NSW Government – A Lessons Management Framework for NSW Emergency Management Sector.
8. The Framework contains a tool kit for lessons management which focuses on developing, storing, and disseminating lessons to develop and maintain whole-of-government institutional memory.

2. What is lessons management?

9. A lesson is based on a positive or negative experience and can include recommendations about what or to do or not do in a similar circumstance in the future.
10. Lessons management is 'the management of a continuous learning cycle where capturing, analysing and implementing lessons, occurs without barriers, and results in measurable

¹ Australian Civil-Military Centre, *Guiding Principles for Civil-Military-Police Interaction in International Disaster and Conflict Management*, Guiding Principle 5, 2015

² Australian Civil-Military Centre - *Australian Interagency Preparedness Framework*, Interagency Operational Effectiveness, 2016

behaviour modification'.³ Lessons management contributes to organisational memory, where lessons are identified and shared, to inform and shape future activities, responses, or behaviours.

11. The lessons management process is the collection, analysis, dissemination, and application of learned experiences. An understanding of the common lessons management language and methods across whole-of-government organisations will support a systematic approach to lessons collection, analysis, and exchange of lessons information.

3. Why do lessons?

12. An effective lessons management framework and process is integral to an organisation's learning culture. Learning lessons is an opportunity for agencies to enhance their organisational outcomes, improve efficiency and effectiveness in an interagency context and capture knowledge for enhanced cooperation. Effective interagency responses require continual evolution and improvement in cross-agency coordination through the implementation of a lessons management process and sharing identified lessons and knowledge.

13. Diagram 1 provides a visual representation of the lessons management process for the Framework.

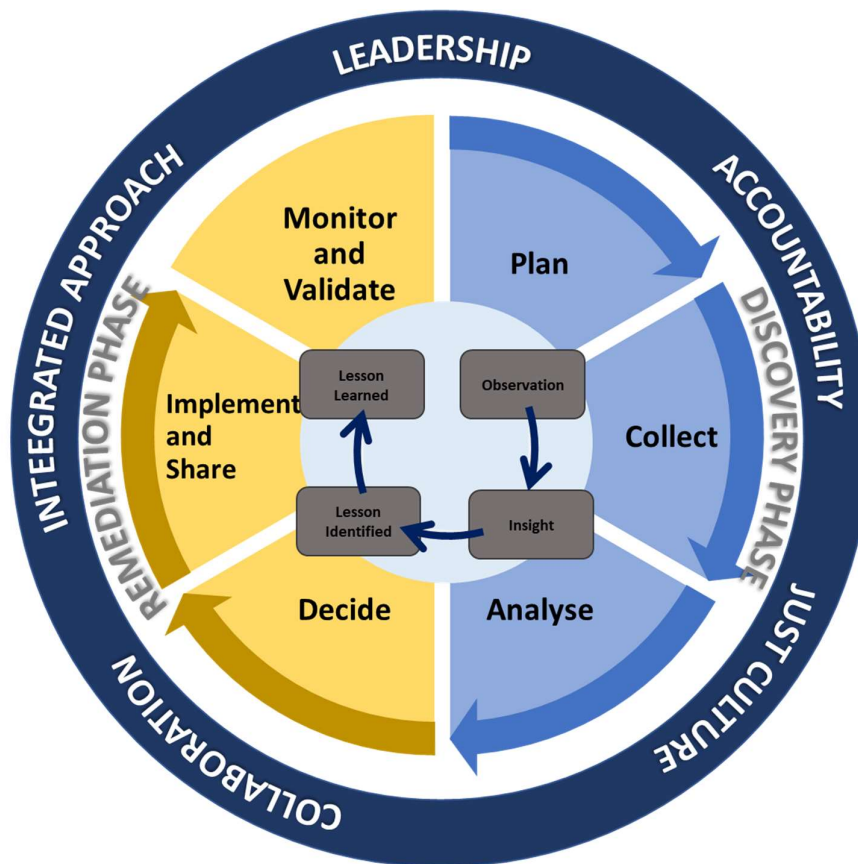


Diagram 1: The lessons management process

³ Jackson, Lisa Marie and Shepherd, Adair Forbes. 'We learn as one: Victoria's journey to collaborative lessons management' [online]. *Australian Journal of Emergency Management*, Vol. 33, No. 2, Apr 2018: 23-26, Figure 1: the EMV lessons management lifecycle is based on research and defines cultural characteristics and lessons management process

4. Principles for whole-of government lessons management

14. This Framework draws on key features from across public and emergency management sector lessons management frameworks. There are key features that these frameworks refer to and promote including the process of lesson collection and implementation. A whole of government cross-agency framework must support whole-of-government lessons activities.

15. The Framework identifies that interagency organisational learning is based on the Integrated Approach principles of Leadership, Accountability, Just Culture, and Collaboration.

4.1 Leadership⁴

16. Lessons management must be promoted and prioritised by leaders at all levels within and across agencies to reinforce the development of a learning culture and organisational memory. The appointment of Lessons Champions to support and promote lesson teams will reinforce organisational lessons management and information sharing.

17. Strong leadership and the promotion of the lessons management processes will foster greater interagency collaboration. This collaboration is built on solid communication, internal and inter-department trust and a shared vision and purpose.

18. At the completion of a whole-of-government crisis response, the lead agency should coordinate an interagency lessons collection activity, supported by the enabling organisations. This collation of experiences into lessons identified or recommendations for improvement will inform decision-makers and reduce the possibility of the same mistakes occurring during future responses.

4.2 Accountability⁵

19. Leaders are accountable for promoting a culture that supports individual and organisational learning. Everyone is accountable for completing actions (assigning and implementing) that are a result of recommendations from the collection of experiences. All staff have a responsibility to learn from personal and agency experiences. Taking accountability in these contexts will enable whole-of-government organisations to undertake cultural and behavioural change and continual improvement.

20. Individuals, teams, and agencies are responsible for implementing the lessons process and plan and work collaboratively to enable interagency information sharing and achieve whole-of-government outcomes.

4.3 Just Culture⁶

21. A just culture requires a balance between no-blame and accountability. During the lessons management cycle people need to feel safe to provide their point of view or experiences. People need to trust that their management will consistently consider all aspects of an issue and management need to trust staff to provide honest feedback on their experiences and take equal responsibility for contributing to organisational learning.

22. In a just culture, staff will not be identified or punished for decisions or actions they undertake based on their level of experience or training. However, gross negligence, wilful violations or destructive acts will not be tolerated, and organisations are to take corrective action to rectify these issues.

⁴ Australian Institute for Disaster Resilience, *Lessons Management Handbook*, 2019, 13

⁵ Australian Institute for Disaster Resilience, *Lessons Management Handbook*, 2019, 14

⁶ Australian Institute for Disaster Resilience, *Lessons Management Handbook*, 2019, 11

4.4 Collaboration⁷

23. Collaboration requires the involvement of whole-of-government stakeholders to develop a networked approach to lessons management and evaluation of crisis responses, exercises, and joint programs. Successful collaboration builds whole-of-government department and agency interoperability and reduces operational risks through shared information and learning.

24. A learning culture values knowledge that comes from agency integration and recognises the importance of building effective and cooperative relationships both within and across organisations. Organisations can develop a learning culture and enable organisational memory through cross-agency lesson partnerships and by prioritising the lessons management process.

4.5 Integrated Approach⁸

25. The Integrated Approach provides common strategic imperatives to improve the effectiveness of whole-of-government collaboration in a multiagency environment.⁹ This approach realises the combined value and capabilities of agencies to achieve a common whole-of-government outcome. Through an Integrated Approach, agencies can collaboratively and cohesively contribute to a whole-of-government crisis response.

‘Where once leaders focused on developing learning organisations in their own workplaces, now officials need to see themselves as part of a system of government that learns together.’¹⁰

5. Lesson management phases and steps

26. The phases of lessons management are:¹¹

Discovery Phase: incorporates how you plan to collect and analyse the experiences of your audience, document that information and create observations and insights which are translated into recommendations for consideration.

DISCOVERY PHASE		
STEP	DEFINITION	OUTPUT
Plan	Stakeholder identification, learning and evaluation priorities – use past lessons in the planning process, ask what leadership information is required, collection responsibilities (by whom and how the information is to be collected, observations, analysis, research and reports)	Collection Plan and Analysis Plan
Collect	Collection of data using multiple sources and methods, including interviewing, de-briefs, After Action Reviews and document review.	Observation
Analyse	Collate and analyse observations, conduct background research through literature reviews, obtain expert subject matter advice, and identify recommendations.	Insight

Table 1: The discovery phase

⁷ *Interagency Preparedness Framework*, 2016, 7, Interagency Preparedness, paragraph 2

⁸ An integrated approach recognises that no one government department has a monopoly over responding to a crises or conflict. The integrated approach makes best use of the broad range of knowledge, skills, and assets across whole-of-government departments.

⁹ *Guiding Principles for Civil-Military-Police Interaction in International Disaster and Conflict Management*, 2015

¹⁰ Alan Ryan, - *Delivering ‘joined-up’ government Achieving the integrated approach to offshore crisis management*, ASPI Strategic Insights – 5, Capturing the lessons of recent experience, November 2016

¹¹ Defence Lessons Management Process, 2020, Chapter 2

Remediation Phase: identifies and presents recommendations and potential lessons to a decision-making body to decide on who has responsibility for implementing, monitoring, and validating their recommendations or lessons.

REMEDATION PHASE		
STEP	DEFINITION	OUTPUT
Decide	Decide on a course of action on the recommendations. through steering committees, learning and evaluation boards,	Lesson Identified
Implement and Share	Implement courses of action and/or sharing of findings (through lessons products), clearly identifying individual, agency, or multi-agency responsibility	Lesson Action or Implementation Plan
Monitor and Validate	Dedicated collection and analysis against an implemented course of action to determine if observable and enduring change has occurred or best practice sustained.	Validation Plan and Lesson Learned

Table 2: The remediation phase

6. The lessons process

27. A common approach to lessons management is based on is the Observation-Insight-Lesson Identified-Lesson Learned (OILL) process¹².

	THE PROCESS	DEFINITION
O	Observation	A single perspective or opinion that relates to a particular incident, exercise, project, or report. These perspectives and/or opinions are collated to form themes.
I	Insight	A deduction from multiple occurrences of a similar observation.
L	Lesson Identified	Based on the analysis of the collated insights, research, and subject matter expert input. It creates a viable course of action for improvement. It is to be included in an action plan, be monitored, and adjusted and have someone responsible for its implementation.
L	Lesson Learned	A lesson is only learned once there is an observable change in behaviour individual or organisational and the lesson has been incorporated into doctrine, training, and procedures.

Table 3: The OILL process and definitions

¹² Australian Institute for Disaster Resilience *Lessons Management Handbook*, 2019, section 3.2, The OILL Process (24) and Glossary (43)

7. Roles and responsibilities

28. Commitment from all levels of involvement, individual to whole-of-government departments and the lessons community of practice, is necessary to enable the successful conduct of whole-of-government lessons management.

Roles and Responsibilities			
Level	Role	Responsibilities	Success Factor
Individual (I)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Share experiences and observations. - Apply lessons to learn and improve. - Contribute to an organisational learning culture. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Capture and share observations through a lesson sharing platform. - Contribute to monitor, debrief, and review activities and lesson action items. - Contribute to implementation of learning and improvement activities. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Individuals understand the lessons management values and processes. - Individuals actively seek education and training on lessons management.
Team (T)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Share experiences and observations. - Apply lessons to learn and improve. - Contribute to an organisational learning culture. - Identify and share observations and Insights 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Capture and share observations through a lesson sharing platform. - Contribute to monitor, debrief, and review activities and lesson action items. - Contribute to implementation of learning and improvement activities. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Teams understand the lessons management values and processes. - Teams actively seek education and training on lessons management. - Interagency information sharing with other agencies, as appropriate. - Past lessons reviewed and incorporated into interagency preparedness and operational activities.
Organisation / Agency (A)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Share experiences and observations. - Apply lessons to learn and improve. - Contribute to an organisational learning culture. - Identify and share lessons. - Promotes and is a champion for an interagency learning culture across whole-of-government. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Capture and share observations through a lesson sharing platform. - Contribute to monitor, debrief, and review activities and lesson action items. - Contribute to implementation of learning and improvement activities. - Allocate personnel and resources to implement a lessons management framework. - Facilitate and oversee the coordination of monitoring, debriefing, and review activities. - Oversee the implementation of change and improvement actions and shares lessons identified and learned. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Agency's understand the role of other agencies. - Interagency information sharing other agencies, as appropriate. - Past lessons reviewed and incorporated into interagency preparedness and operational activities. - Lesson frameworks and platforms are consistent and interoperable. - Lessons inform strategic decision making, policy and the planning and conduct of operations. - Implement a robust lessons culture across organisations that promotes organisational learning and institutional memory. - Develop IT platforms to share lessons information.

Roles and Responsibilities			
Level	Role	Responsibilities	Success Factor
Whole-of-Government (WoG)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Share experiences and observations. - Apply lessons to learn and improve. - Contribute to an organisational learning culture. - Identify and share lessons. - Promotes and champions interagency learning culture across whole-of-government. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Capture and share observations through a lesson sharing platform. - Contribute to monitor, debrief, and review activities and lesson action items. - Contribute to implementation of learning and improvement activities. - Allocate personnel and resources to implement a lessons management framework. - Facilitate and oversee the coordination of monitoring, debriefing, and review activities. - Oversee the implementation of change and improvement actions and shares lessons identified and learned. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Agency's understand the role of other agencies. - Interagency information sharing other agencies, as appropriate. - Past lessons are reviewed and incorporated into interagency preparedness and operational activities. - Lesson frameworks and platforms are consistent and interoperable. - Lessons inform strategic decision making, policy and the planning and conduct of operations. - Implementation of a robust lessons culture across organisations that promotes organisation learning and institutional memory. - Develop IT platforms to share lessons information.
Community of Practice (CoP)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Share experiences and observations. - Apply lessons to learn and improve. - Contribute to an organisational learning culture. - Identify and share lessons. - Promotes and is a champion for an interagency learning culture across whole-of-government. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Capture and share observations through a lesson sharing platform. - Contribute to monitor, debrief, and review activities and lesson action items. - Contribute to implementation of learning and improvement activities. - Allocates personnel and resources to implement a lessons management framework. - Facilitate and oversee the coordination of monitoring, debriefing, and review activities. - Oversee the implementation of change and improvement actions and shares lessons identified and learned. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Agency's understand the role of other agencies. - Interagency information sharing other agencies, as appropriate. - Ensures past lessons are reviewed and incorporated into interagency preparedness and operational activities. - Lesson frameworks and platforms are consistent and interoperable. - Lessons inform strategic decision making, policy and the planning and conduct of operations. - Implementation of a robust lessons culture across organisations that promotes organisation learning and institutional memory. - Develop IT platforms to share lessons information.

Table 4: Lessons management roles and responsibilities

8. What does success look like?

29. Successful lessons activities across whole-of-government organisations will foster collaboration and achieve:
- a. strong governance, leadership, advocacy, engagement, and commitment at all levels across whole-of-government departments and agencies
 - b. inclusive and transparent communication and engagement across whole-of-government civil-military-police departments and agencies
 - c. robust multiagency partnerships which delivers Australian Government outcomes
 - d. agile whole-of-government response planning that meets requirements and develops future lessons capability including technological considerations for suitable platforms to share lessons information
 - e. a just, fair, and continuous improvement culture that prioritises sharing lessons within and between agencies to stimulate organisational learning and memory
 - f. staff development, where staff are resourced and trained to apply the lesson management and lesson processes.

8.1 Learning action areas

30. Organisations should apply these five action areas for effective lessons management:

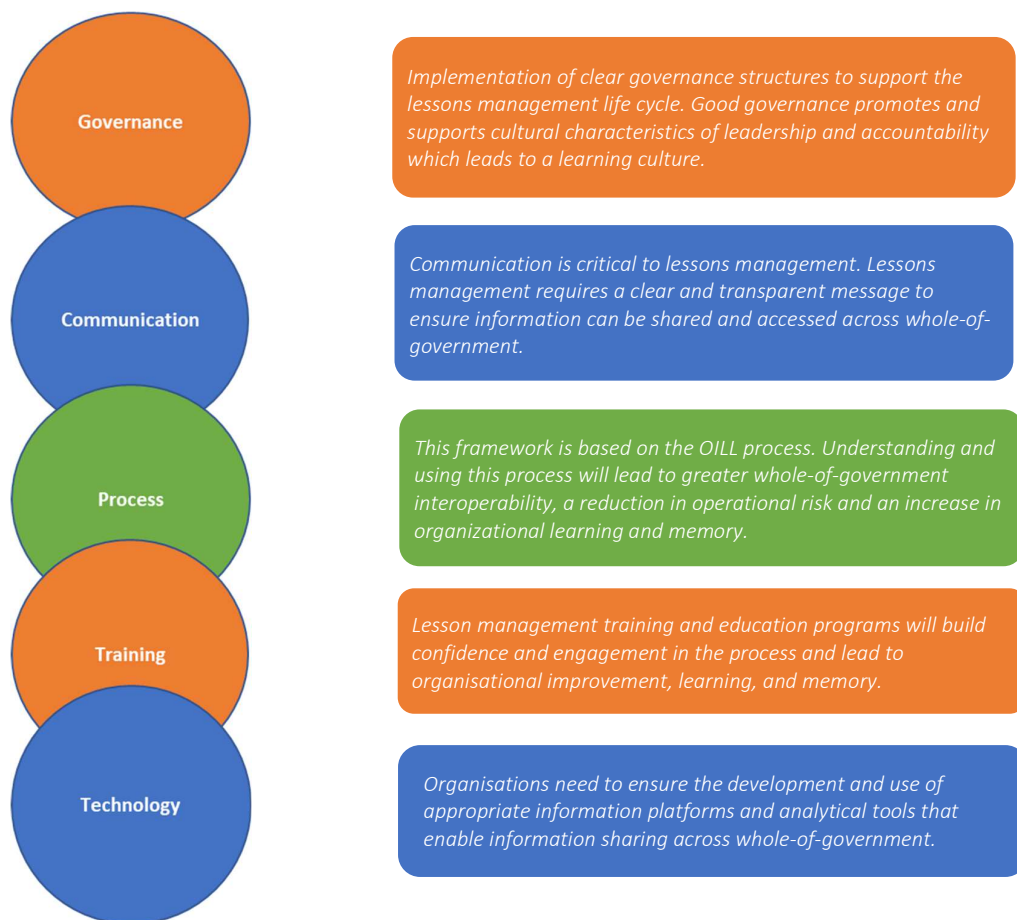


Diagram 2: Action areas supporting the whole-of-government lessons framework.

9. Conclusion

31. There is no one size fits all approach to lessons management. As agencies adopt a lessons management framework, they can, supported by their leaders and Lesson Champions, create a learning culture that enables organisational memory and continuous improvement.

32. The development, and implementation of whole-of-government interagency lessons management is essential for collecting and sharing organisational experiences across the sector. These actions will provide a whole-of-government capability to the Australian Government. They will enable the deployment of effective and efficient inter-departmental task forces to provide a cohesive response to domestic and international crises and conflicts on behalf of the Australian community.

[The whole-of-government] lessons capability ... is currently poorly understood, because different agencies do it differently. Approaches vary from official histories to computer databases, spreadsheets and quick impact studies. In the first instance, an effective national lessons capability needs to be accessible. Someone needs to be responsible for 'telling the story' of what happened and working with all the stakeholders involved to agree on what worked and what didn't. It isn't an audit; nor is it an exercise in ascribing blame.¹³

¹³ *Delivering 'joined-up' government - Achieving the integrated approach to offshore crisis management*, ASPI Strategic Insights - 9, paragraph 5, Practical Actions to strengthen joined-up government, November 2016

10. Resources

1. Information about conducting lessons can be found in:
 - a. The Australian Institute for Disaster Resilience's online publication and research platform, the *Australian Disaster Resilience Knowledge Hub* (<https://knowledge.aidr.org.au/>)
 - b. Australian Institute of Disaster Resilience, *Lessons Management Handbook*, 2019 (https://www.aidr.org.au/media/1760/aidr_handbookcollection_lessonsmanagement_2019.pdf) and companion documents:
 - i. *Lessons Management Case Studies*, 2019 (https://www.aidr.org.au/media/7032/aidr_handbookcollection_lessonsmanagement_case_studies_2019-07-24_v12.pdf)
 - ii. *Lessons Management Models and Examples*, 2019 (https://www.aidr.org.au/media/7033/aidr_handbookcollection_lessonsmanagement_models_and_examples_2019-07-24_v12.pdf)
 - c. Emergency Management Victoria, *EM-LEARN Framework*, 2015 (<https://www.emv.vic.gov.au/how-we-help/reviews-and-lessons-management/lessons-management-framework-em-learn>)
 - d. Defence Lessons Directorate, *Defence Lessons Handbook*, 2020
 - e. Adaptive Warfare Branch, *Lessons Learned Handbook*, HQ 1st Division, 2018
 - f. New South Wales Office of Emergency Management, *A Lessons Management Framework*, 2018 (<https://www.emergency.nsw.gov.au/Documents/A%20Lessons%20Management%20Framework%20for%20NSW%20Emergency%20Management%20Sector.pdf>)
 - g. Australian Emergency Management Institute, *Lesson Management Handbook 8*, 2013
 - h. Australian Civil-Military Centre, *Australian Government Guiding Principles for Civil-Military-Police Interaction in International Disaster and Conflict Management*, 2015 (<https://www.acmc.gov.au/resources/publications/australian-government-guiding-principles-civil-military-police-interaction>)
 - i. Australian Civil-Military Centre, *Australian Interagency Preparedness Framework*, 2016