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# Developing an Interagency Stabilization and Reconstruction Lessons Learned Process

By

**Chris Wendell, S/CRS, and Amon Killeen, OSD/STB,  
Lessons Learned Task Force Facilitators,  
The Best Practices Working Group (BPWG),  
formed under National Security Presidential Directive-44**

[The following article originally appeared in the *Consortium for Complex Operations Defense Diplomacy Development, Edition: August 2008, Issue No. 2.*]



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Agency-specific lessons learned processes and multiagency knowledge sharing solutions exist at the operational and tactical levels. However, developing an integrated, interagency process at the strategic level will help to ensure that the U.S. Government, as a whole, is further empowered to prepare, plan for, and respond to contingencies in the future.

The Best Practices Working Group (BPWG), formed under National Security Presidential Directive-44 (NSPD-44), *Management of Interagency Efforts Concerning Reconstruction and Stabilization*, is exploring options for developing an interagency Stabilization and Reconstruction (S&R) Lessons Learned process.

The BPWG has established an interagency Lessons Learned Task Force to flesh-out specific options for how an interagency stabilization and reconstruction lessons learned process could collect, vet, distribute, and, most importantly, implement lessons in a timely fashion. In addition to examining advantages and disadvantages for each option, the task force is identifying potential bureaucratic obstacles, resource implications, and mitigation strategies.

The Lessons Learned Task Force builds on the Provincial Reconstruction Team (PRT) Lessons Learned Workshop, which was hosted by the BPWG, the U.S. Army Peacekeeping and Stability Operations Institute (PKSOI), and the Consortium for Complex Operations (CCO) on March 11-12, 2008 in Gettysburg, Pennsylvania. More than 80 participants took part, representing a broad cross-section of practitioners, trainers, policy-makers, and lessons learned experts. The workshop examined PRTs holistically, noting fundamental differences between Afghanistan and Iraq. The event helped to identify recommendations for improving the effectiveness of PRTs and future models, and to start the process to conceptualize a U.S. government lessons learned system for S&R.

The task force's methodology includes an informal survey of the experience and best business practices of lessons learned approaches across the federal government. For example, members of the task force have interviewed experts at a range of organizations from NASA to the Internal Revenue Service to the Department of Homeland Security. In addition, the task force has interviewed potential customers of an S&R lessons learned process to better understand requirements from the strategic to tactical levels. Common themes of the interviews include effective approaches to promote a non-reprisal culture of learning and trust, which is critical for success. In addition, having senior level champions and a protected

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budget and mandate are enablers that ensure an unimpeded and meaningful process. Finally, ensuring accessibility from the field and that the process is responsive to customer requirements are essential.

The task force comprises representatives from civilian and military organizations including: Department of State, Office of the Coordinator for Reconstruction and Stabilization (S/CRS); Office of the Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense for Stability Operations Capabilities (OSD/STB); USAID Chief Operating Officer; USAID Democracy, Conflict, and Humanitarian Assistance; U.S. Department of Agriculture; Joint Staff J-7; Joint Center for Operational Analysis; Headquarters U.S. Air Force A9L; Center for Army Lessons Learned; PKSOI; and the CCO.

From the CCO community especially, the Lessons Learned Task Force would welcome advice, inputs, and experience in developing this process. For further information or comments, please start a member discussion in the CCO portal (preferable) or feel free to contact the facilitators: Chris Wendell, S/CRS, WendellGC@state.gov, 202-663-0846; or Amon Killeen, OSD/STB, amon.killeen.ctr@osd.mil, 703-697-5543.