

Communications Risk Assessment Matrix

This matrix helps organizations decide how, when and where to communicate during uncertain times, ensuring mission-aligned and risk-aware messaging.

- What is the level of risk (low, moderate, high)?
- What do we stand to gain or lose by communicating?
- Are other trusted organizations speaking about this issue?
- Are we adding value to the overall conversation?
- Are you prepared to respond further and continue the conversation after your initial message is shared?

| Factor | Key Questions | Low Risk | Moderate Risk | High Risk |
|--------------------------------|---|---|--|---|
| Mission Alignment | Does this message align with our mission and values? Is it necessary for our audiences to hear from us? | Messaging directly supports core mission and values | Messaging aligns but may require more explanation or clarification | Messaging may be perceived as political or outside the core mission |
| Audience Impact | Who needs to hear this message? How will key stakeholders react? | The audience is likely to be receptive and supportive | The audience may be divided or require more context | The audience would react negatively or disengage |
| Funding Implications | Could this statement affect current or potential funders? | Messaging is unlikely to affect funding sources | Messaging may create mild concerns | Messaging could threaten funding relationships |
| Political Sensitivity | Does this message position us in a political debate? Is neutrality possible? | Not politically charged: widely accepted topic | May touch on political issues but can be framed neutrally | Directly addresses politically sensitive or controversial issues |
| Urgency & Timing | Is immediate communication necessary? Can we wait for more clarity? | Clear need to communicate now; very time-sensitive | Important, but timing can be flexible | Unclear need to communicate at this time |
| Message Clarity & Accuracy | Do we have enough facts to support our message? Are we confident in our talking points? | Well-vetted, factual, clear message/talking points | Some uncertainty but based on credible sources | Unverified or speculative information |
| Reputation & Public Perception | Could this message create negative media attention or brand issues? | Messaging is unlikely to cause controversy or backlash | Messaging may cause minor debate or require additional explanation | Messaging could harm public trust or require damage control |
| Communication Method | What is the best channel for this message? Would a quieter or louder approach be more effective? | Internal updates, direct outreach, email newsletters, private meetings with funders | Public statements, social media, media interviews | Press conferences, advocacy campaigns, petitions |
| Frequency | How often do stakeholders need updates? Are we communicating proactively or reactively? | Incorporate messages into regular updates | Moderate updates needed as the situation evolves | Frequent updates, but understand that they may cause fatigue or alarm |