

Leading Through Uncertainty

This resource is designed to guide values-driven decision making and communication in your organization. Use these exercises to navigate rapid-response scenarios and prepare for the future.

Values-Based Decision Filter

When something difficult happens, ask these questions—before you act—to determine if and how to respond:

- Does this affect the people we serve?
- Does it connect to our mission?
- Are we the right organization to respond?
- Do we have something unique and valuable to contribute?
- Do we have the capacity to respond well?
- What could happen if we stay silent?
- What could happen if we speak?
- What response best reflects who we are?

Possible Responses

In these situations, leadership can take many forms. Here are some ways your organization may choose to respond in a strategic, values-aligned manner:

- Speaking publicly (e.g., issuing a statement)
- Sharing resources
- Convening partners
- Listening
- Supporting staff (including internal communication)
- Amplifying trusted voices
- Engaging in advocacy
- Waiting
- Choosing not to comment publicly

The “Who Needs What?” Audience Assessment

Different people experience the same event differently. You may not need to communicate with every audience group in every situation, but it’s valuable to consider their perspectives. Use this template to identify responses that are tailored for each.

	What might they feel?	What do they need?	When?	Who is the best messenger?
Staff				
Participants				
Families				
Donors				
Board				
Community Partners				
Media				

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First Response Checklist

Use this checklist to develop and implement your response strategy.

1. Pause

- ☐ What do we actually know? Do we have the info we need?
- ☐ What don't we know?
- ☐ Who needs to be involved in this process?
- ☐ Who is making decisions, and how?

2. Decide*

- ☐ Are we taking a position and/or taking action?
What is the purpose or desired outcome?
- ☐ Does this require communication?
 - ☐ Internal?
 - ☐ External?
 - ☐ Both?

3. Respond

- ☐ What can we say honestly today?
- ☐ Who is the best messenger?
- ☐ Are we saying it on our own or with other organizations?
- ☐ Are we ready to talk about it?
What materials need to be prepared?
- ☐ When will we provide another update?

4. Re-evaluate

- ☐ How is the response being received?
- ☐ What did we learn?
- ☐ What systems, protocols, or messaging can we update to be better prepared in the future?

**Use the Values-Based Decision Filter to help you decide.*

Organizational Risk Scan

A risk scan can help you proactively identify scenarios and prepare for likely events. Looking ahead over the next six months, what uncertainties are emerging that may require an internal or external response?

	What are we noticing?
Funding	
Staff	
Community	
Policy	
Reputation	
Partnerships	

Based on your analysis, consider:

Which of these uncertainties deserve more attention now?

How can we proactively communicate in order to strengthen transparency and trust?

Where can we mitigate risk?

For scenarios beyond our control, how can we be better prepared to respond?

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Personal Leadership Reflection

Leadership resilience is part of organizational resilience. Use these reflection questions to help you navigate your role with strength and care.

What is giving me energy?

What is draining me?

Who helps me process difficult moments?

What boundary do I need to strengthen to protect my own well-being?

What is one act of self-care I will commit to this month?

Go Further

Explore more guidance related to crisis communications in Chapter 4 of our [Communications Toolkit](#).