Checklist to Build Trust, Improve Public Health Communication, and Anticipate Misinformation During Public Health Emergencies

Instead of reading the checklist in its entirety, you can use a more targeted approach by checking off your organization’s existing capacities below and reading only those sections related to identified gaps or areas of interest.

**Priority 1: Build Critical Communication Capacities**

- **Activity 1:** Build and maintain a PHEPR communication workforce that is well-prepared and reflective of the community it serves
  - Task 1.1: Identify and characterize existing PHEPR communication workforce assets
  - Task 1.2: Establish and pursue avenues to remedy workforce gaps
  - Task 1.3: Recognize and address threats to building and maintaining a PHEPR communication workforce

- **Activity 2:** Ensure that existing budgetary, operations, and financing approaches for PHEPR communication activities reflect prospective needs during an emergency
  - Task 2.1: Understand current PHEPR communication funding
  - Task 2.2: Curate alternative resources that may be deployed before or during a public health emergency
  - Task 2.3: Prepare administrative strategies in anticipation of just-in-time emergency disbursements
  - Task 2.4: Streamline bureaucratic and administrative processes that hinder responding in “feast-or-famine” financing conditions

- **Activity 3:** Know your audience and their history with public health
  - Task 3.1: Discern audience characteristics
  - Task 3.2: Understand intended audience’s history with public health and related institutions

**Priority 2: Develop Meaningful & Lasting Relationships with Your Community**

- **Activity 1:** Establish public health personnel as trusted members of the community
  - Task 1.1: Assess readiness for community relationships
  - Task 1.2: Identify key principles and norms for engaging with communities
  - Task 1.3: Be immersed in community spaces and present at local events initiatives, and meetings
  - Task 1.4: Build in mechanisms for sharing decision-making processes with communities

- **Activity 2:** Make strategic and intentional investments in building community
  - Task 2.1: Conduct assessments to understand community networks and needs to inform a plan of action
  - Task 2.2: Establish a track record of supporting the community in a range of ways, even if small
  - Task 2.3: Develop avenues for community members to integrate into the local public health community
  - Task 2.4: Prioritize sustainability when building community relationships and evaluate progress
Priority 3: Create & Maintain Strong Partnerships with Secondary Messengers

- Activity 1: Create a strategy for maximizing the use of secondary messengers in public health communication efforts
  - Task 1.1: Conduct an assessment to understand needs of key partners and likely secondary messengers
  - Task 1.2: Identify and engage with potential strategic partners for secondary messaging
  - Task 1.3: Identify public health capacities and resources that can be leveraged as benefits to formal secondary messengers

- Activity 2: Develop formal processes to engage and incorporate secondary messengers into message development, distribution, and evaluation efforts
  - Task 2.1: Develop shared expectations with potential partners
  - Task 2.2: Collaborate with partners on message development and distribution efforts

- Activity 3: Cultivate opportunities for informal sharing of messages
  - Task 3.1: Leverage informal secondary messengers in virtual spaces
  - Task 3.2: Leverage informal secondary messengers in physical spaces

Priority 4: Anticipate Misinformation & Potential Loss of Trust

- Activity 1: Enable appropriate understanding of what public health is and does
  - Task 1.1: Establish what public health is and its benefits to society
  - Task 1.2: Clarify how government services—including the public health department—are organized
  - Task 1.3: Explain the goals and thought processes behind public health operations
  - Task 1.4: Plan robust public feedback mechanisms prior to an emergency

- Activity 2: Set expectations for public health response and communication at the start of a health emergency
  - Task 2.1: Help members of the public understand issues of uncertainty
  - Task 2.2: Establish processes and plans to communicate changes in guidance as understanding evolves
  - Task 2.3: Set an appropriate communication cadence

- Activity 3: Track, analyze, understand, and plan for anticipated rumors in local contexts
  - Task 3.1: Establish tracking and analysis systems for social listening
  - Task 3.2: Integrate an understanding of local audience values and needs with expected rumors
  - Task 3.3: Develop prebunking and inoculation messages

- Activity 4: Promote use of and access to trusted sources
  - Task 4.1: Facilitate access to trustworthy health information and teach critical thinking skills to enhance information self-sufficiency
  - Task 4.2: Enhance information accessibility and understandability
Priority 5: Formulate Key Message Components & Maximize Message Engagement

☐ Activity 1: Draft key messages
  ☐ Task 1.1: Embrace a basic content format for communicating accurate information in an emergency
  ☐ Task 1.2: Employ specialized approaches to confront rumors
  ☐ Task 1.3: Consider and apply lessons from existing messaging models

☐ Activity 2: Tailor messages based on understanding of the intended audience
  ☐ Task 2.1: Identify intended audiences for messaging
  ☐ Task 2.2: Consider specific needs of the intended audience that may influence their perspectives on public health messages
  ☐ Task 2.3: Engage in dialogue to build trust, increase message effectiveness, and combat misinformation

☐ Activity 3: Ensure messages get to intended audiences via preferred channels and trusted voices
  ☐ Task 3.1: Tailor channel utilization to increase engagement with intended audiences
  ☐ Task 3.2: Identify and integrate trusted messengers into messaging efforts to increase uptake and effectiveness

☐ Activity 4: Design messages using tone and visuals that will resonate with intended audiences
  ☐ Task 4.1: Increase engagement by using eye-catching visuals and other formatting
  ☐ Task 4.2: Revise messaging content and tone to increase messaging reach
  ☐ Task 4.3: Sync message tailoring for maximum effectiveness

☐ Activity 5: Regularly evaluate the engagement and impact of PHEPR communication efforts
  ☐ Task 5.1: Select and execute an evaluation process complementary to organizational goals and capacities
  ☐ Task 5.2: Link evaluation results to message development and tailoring efforts