

Checklist to Build Trust, Improve Public Health Communication, and Anticipate Rumors 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 Misleading Rumors & 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 address rumors
- ☐ **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