

Climate/Immigration Executive Order Crisis Tick Tock (Sample)

PURPOSE

We all recognize that an attack by the administration against any one of our institutions is directed at all of us. The administration's goal is to send a chilling effect throughout the nonprofit sector that muzzles our spending and derails our missions. Thus, we must prepare and act accordingly as a united front, fighting back with our collective voices and resources. Even if a particular attack does not impact our particular organization directly, it is crucial that we speak out in support of each other and stand strong.

Emerging intel suggests a potential executive order focused on nonprofits and/or foundations working on climate (and possibly immigration), including targeting the tax-exempt status of these groups. This document is our shared battle plan for the critical first 48 hours following the announcement of such an EO. It will be adapted in real time in response to the specifics as we learn them.

ADVANCE PREPARATION

Goals: In preparation for these potential attacks, we should take time now to prepare ourselves and our stakeholders and networks for what may be coming soon. There are specific actions we can take in advance to be in the strongest possible position to move quickly and effectively.

As we do this, think about the organization's guiding principles and values. This will give you a touchstone throughout the coming days, weeks, and beyond. For example, possible considerations might be:

- Prepare a strong game plan, and consult continuously to adapt as needed.
- Ensure safety in all personal internal and external communications.
- Affirm and assert your organizational values in everything you say and do.
- Do not go it alone – offer and ask for solidarity!

Other concrete actions can lay the groundwork for a quick and impactful response.

- 1. Prepare internally so you know what you will do, whom you will contact, etc., if and when something occurs.**
 - Determine who needs to have a heads up that something may be coming – board members, staff, grantees, partners, community leaders, and others.
- 2. Prepare a holding statement now that you can adapt once we know the specifics and be ready to issue it publicly.**
- 3. Reach out to your partners and influential allies to prime them for what is coming, so that they can be tapped to speak out in support when the time comes.**
 - In addition to your own spokespeople, who else can help in a moment of challenge? If possible, identify and reach out to people outside of the foundation who can be ready to speak in support:
 - One to two board members
 - One to two grantees, especially those providing direct services, working in rural/politically moderate to conservative areas, coming from a faith-based perspective, etc.
 - Business leaders who are familiar with your work or that of your grantees
 - Political/elected officials who can express support and potentially take action in support.

DAY 1

Goals: During the early hours and first day of the crisis, there is a need to balance collecting information and fortifying our defenses with being responsive and ensuring that our position is reflected in the news coverage and general chatter around the crisis. Public statements should be short, pithy, and focused on the big picture, even as we continue to collect more information on what is actually happening.

- 1. Initial Information gathering**
 - What is in the news?
 - What is coming from your foundation networks?
 - If applicable: what are you hearing from your own contacts (policymakers, government relations staff/consultants, etc.)?

2. Convene your own crisis team (presidents, senior staff, comms, legal) to devise strategy and determine next steps. Discuss:

- The facts around the crisis (who is directly involved, how could this impact core committee foundations, what is the administration demanding)
- The best desired outcome from the crisis
- Alignment with previously prepared crisis scenarios (what are we tapping into/building from as we respond)
- Specific spokespeople and validators
- Timeline of crisis and how much time we have to respond
- What further information is necessary to make immediate decisions
- Recurring morning/evening check-in time for early crisis days

3. Coordination

- Provide notice of crisis to internal staff and board
 - Draft notes below: [staff](#) and [board](#)
- Look for information on info-sharing/strategy calls from coalition and PSOs
- Provide notice of crisis to potentially impacted grantees

4. Messaging

- Review messaging to align with the specifics of the situation
- Prepare press statement or press quotes
- Reach out to potential spokespeople: board members, grantees, civic partners/leaders, etc. to brief them, prepare them for media

5. Communications/Media

- Respond to any media inquiries with a [Press Holding Statement](#) (sample structure below; more examples to come)
- Actively engage on social media to share your own statement and those of others in the field

6. Validators

- Reach out to your non-foundation validators to update them and support them in preparing their own statements
 - Share your own statement and any guidance you have received
 - Draft social media posts

DAY 2

Goals: By day 2, we should have more information on the details of the crisis. The initial media coverage around the crisis will likely have been published and—in all likelihood—

breaking news reporters will already have started moving on to the next shiny object. This is when we want to invest in outreach to inform and shape the coverage of reporters and audiences who are in it for the long haul.

1. Coordination

- Convene crisis team to discuss:
 - Latest updates, intel, and news coverage
 - Necessary pivots or changes to strategy or timeline
 - Assignments / division of labor
- Convene staff to:
 - Provide updates of what is known
 - Provide overview of response strategy and timeline
- Convene communications team to discuss:
 - News coverage
 - Social media chatter
 - Reporters to follow up with
 - Continued pitching/placement of spokespeople
- Continue ongoing communication (daily huddles by phone/zoom, rather than detailed email updates) with:
 - Leadership
 - Board Directors
 - Comms team
 - Legal

2. Updates

- Disseminate updated Day 2 messaging to staff, board
- Send Day 2 talking points to validators

3. Communications/Media

- Continue to promote your own statement and those of other foundations on social media
- If capacity allows, pitch your spokespeople to press, including in your own local media market

DAY 3 AND BEYOND

By day 3, the dust is likely starting to settle for the outside world. Meanwhile, reality will just be settling in for the philanthropic community. We'll still be in “crisis-mode” of course.

But with the chess pieces starting to land on the board, we can begin to execute a concrete game plan. After the initial 48 hours, but during the early days and weeks of the crisis we anticipate:

- Hosting regular communications war room zooms with broader list of foundations
- Hosting a press briefing
- Ed board meetings
- Publishing op-eds
- Distributing weekly talking points

Draft Materials

DRAFT PRESS HOLDING STATEMENT

Major U.S. foundations condemn the Trump administration's executive order on ___ as an assault on fundamental freedoms to give back to our communities. The [INSERT INSTITUTION NAME] joins foundations, philanthropists, and corporate institutions in vehemently condemning the Administration's decision to _____. It is not only an act of repressive retaliation against points of view the administration disagrees with, the [EXECUTIVE ORDER] is also an attack against the rights we all have under the First Amendment to give and spend charitable resources in line with our independent beliefs and values.

Enough is enough.

The U.S. Constitution and rule of law are under a full-frontal assault. Everyone, from corporate America to philanthropy and beyond, must speak out so that our elected officials step up—for the sake of our economic stability, the safety and security of the American people, and the democratic legacy of the nation they serve.

INTERNAL COMMS: NOTE TO FOUNDATION STAFF

Dear Colleagues,

I hope this message finds you well. The moment we have been preparing for is here, as we see a credible threat to our work and the overall philanthropic sector in the announcement [LINK] of the Trump Administration's [EXECUTIVE ORDER] on [CLIMATE/IMMIGRATION]. The targeting of [CLIMATE/IMMIGRATION] is a clear signal to our sector that the administration is focused on undermining the work of private actors that it disagrees with, and is using this [EXECUTIVE ORDER] to enforce compliance with their agenda or otherwise face consequences. We have been anticipating this moment and are working with a team of internal staff and external experts to meet this moment with a crisis action plan that will go into effect immediately.

I want to assure you that we are deploying multiple tactics to help us get through this challenging moment, including efforts to build solidarity among our fellow foundations and are working with our general counsel to ensure we are prepared.

We will be holding an all-staff meeting to discuss next steps on [DAY, DATE, and TIME and zoom link]. On this call, we will provide a status update on where we are at, guidance on what to say to any grantees who may have seen the news and are reaching out to you and answer any questions you may have. We encourage you to submit questions in advance here [LINK] and will take them live during our meeting as well.

[OPTIONAL: REMINDER OF INTERNAL FOUNDATION MEDIA PROTOCOLS – DIRECT INQUIRIES TO COMMS TO ADDRESS.]

We have done considerable work as a staff to prepare for this moment as best we can, and I commend you all for your hard work in helping us get here. We are in this fight together and I appreciate your continued dedication to [NAME OF FOUNDATION], our grantees and communities we support as we navigate this news and our response. Please reach out if you have any questions.

Warmly,
[PRESIDENT OR CHIEF]

INTERNAL COMMS: NOTE TO BOARD

Dear [FOUNDATION NAME] Board Members,

I hope this message finds you well. The moment we have been preparing for is here, as we see a credible threat to our work and the overall philanthropic sector in the announcement [LINK] of the Trump Administration's [EXECUTIVE ORDER] on [CLIMATE/IMMIGRATION]. The targeting of [CLIMATE/IMMIGRATION] is a clear signal to our sector that the administration is focused on undermining the work of private actors that it disagrees with, and is using this [EXECUTIVE ORDER] to enforce compliance to their agenda or otherwise face consequences. We have been anticipating this moment and are working with a team of internal staff and external experts to meet this moment with a crisis action plan, that will go into effect immediately.

I want to assure you that we are deploying multiple tactics to help us get through this challenging moment, including efforts to build solidarity among our fellow foundations and work with our general counsel and communications team to ensure we are prepared.

[Our next step is to hold a virtual call as a board to discuss next steps on DAY, DATE, and TIME] OR [Our next step is to hold a virtual call as a board ASAP to discuss next steps. Please fill out this form (LINK) with your availability and we will follow up with a confirmation of date and time.]

Thank you for your previous advice and guidance on these issues, and your continued dedication to [FOUNDATION NAME]. We are in this fight together and appreciate your support as we navigate this news and our response. Please reach out if you have any questions.

Warmly,
[PRESIDENT OR CHIEF]