



Steady Voices in Unsteady Times

Strategies for Communicating in Crisis

October 20, 2025

Speakers



Kate Treanor

*Senior Program Director and
Strategic Advisor
Grantmakers In Health*



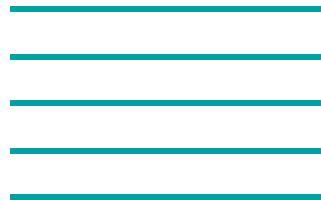
Beth Titter

*Partner, Social Impact
FGS Global*



Chrystal Okonta

*Director, Health
FGS Global*



Agenda



2:00 pm **Welcome & Introductions**

*Kate Treanor,
Grantmakers In Health*

2:05 pm **Discussion:**
Introduction to Crisis
Communications + Quick-Start Guide

*Beth Tritter and Chrystal Okonta,
FGS Global*

2:15 pm **Tabletop Exercise:**
Managing Crisis: Recognizing and
Responding to Challenges

*Beth Tritter and Chrystal Okonta,
FGS Global*

3:05 pm **Wrap-Up:**
Report out on tabletop exercise

*Beth Tritter and Chrystal Okonta,
FGS Global*

3:15 pm **End of Session**



Objectives

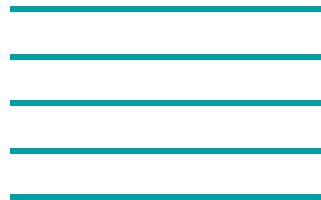
- Familiarize participants with guidelines and a process for preparing and planning for a communications crisis.
 - Understand how to organize your team to manage issues and respond to communications crises.
 - Understand how to determine whether an issue rises to the level of a crisis and guiding principles for crisis response.
- Practice responding to a potential crisis scenario.



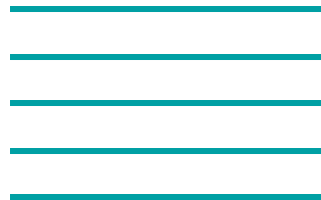
Discussion: Introduction to Crisis Communications + Quick-Start Guide

Guiding Principles for Crisis Communications

- **Be consistent:** Speak with one voice. Wherever possible, reinforce your core values.
- **Keep it simple:** Ensure your statements stick to confirmed facts.
- **Prioritize:** Not every aspect of a crisis requires a response.
- **Be timely and be accurate:** Communicate as early as possible, while accounting for accuracy.
- **Stay on your front foot:** Whenever possible, ensure that key audiences hear news from you directly.
- **Be coordinated:** Coordinate across your organization and the field.
- **Accept that “perception is reality”:** Be forthcoming, honest, empathetic, and proactive.
- **Anticipate what’s next:** Stay one step ahead of the next questions and track the tone of the conversation.



Phases of Crisis Management



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Quick-Start Guide for Funders

Crisis Preparedness and
Response on the Fly

Crisis Preparedness and Response on the Fly

How to Prepare Before a Crisis



STEP 1

Monitor threats to your organization.

- Set up Google Alerts
- Track social media mentions
- Consider using monitoring tools to track across multiple platforms



STEP 2

Identify a crisis response team.

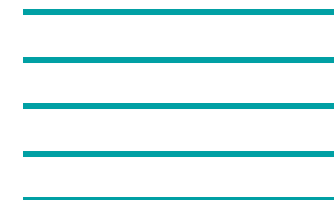
- Identify who can be activated in case an issue arises—your Crisis Working Group



STEP 3

Plan and prepare crisis materials.

- Prepare key messages and talking points
- Consider your stakeholders
- Develop a press list
- Draft template communications materials



Template Crisis Communications Materials

- Holding statements
- Key messages and talking points
- FAQs and tough questions
- Internal emails and/or letters (*for employees, board members, etc.*)
- Letters and/or newsletters to grantees

We are proud to have served our community for the last 25 years and are grateful to partner closely with many community organizations that share our mission of improving health for all. We look forward to continuing this important work.

- Example holding statement

Where to Start During a Crisis



STEP 1 **Identify a crisis and assess your risk.**

- Determine whether an issue rises to the level of a crisis
- Use a risk assessment model to determine your level of risk (i.e., low, medium, or high)



STEP 2 **Activate your crisis response team.**

- Alert your Crisis Working Group members and convene the team
- REMEMBER: Reach out to GIH



STEP 3 **Review and verify the key facts.**

- Work with the Crisis Working Group, and subject matter experts as appropriate, to gather information
- Confirm if any information is confidential and/or should not be released



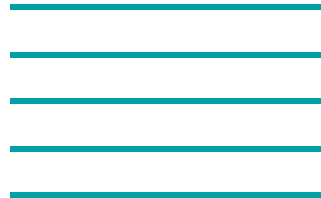
STEP 4 **Coordinate your crisis response.**

- Determine your response strategy
- Develop (and approve) your crisis communications materials
- Distribute your crisis communications materials



STEP 5 **Monitor and reassess.**

- Assign someone to monitor the situation and provide regular reports
- Periodically reassess if the level of risk to the organization has escalated or cooled



Tabletop Exercise: Managing Crisis: Recognizing and Responding to Challenges

The Scenario

Today is October 20, 2025



GRANT
MAKERS
IN
HEALTH

Step 1: Identify a crisis and assess your risk.

Low Risk

Medium Risk

High Risk

- An issue that can be managed in the ordinary course of business
- A serious issue that requires a timely or immediate, cross-functional response
- A very serious issue that poses a direct threat to your reputation, brand, or ability to operate
- Monitor the issue carefully to ensure the risk level does not increase
- As a high-risk situation de-escalates, evolving details or criticism (and thus risk) may linger
- Will most often require an external response



Where's our money going??? John Doe Health Foundation received \$12.1M in state taxpayer funds ('23-'24) to fund ANTIFA like @HealthJusticeOrg that start riots HERE, they are also working with a 501(c)4 for "political activities"... even more protests?? CEO @CarolCollins_JDH makes \$1M and they have "investment management" funding the radical left... WHY OUR TAX DOLLARS MISUSED?? #TaxpayerFunds #StopANTIFA @StateSenJillJones @LocalNews @JohnDoeHealth

ObjectID: 202403209349100430 - Submission: 2024-11-15 TIN: 98-7654321

Name: JOHN DOE HEALTH FOUNDATION
EIN: 98-7654321

plan: THE FOUNDATION'S ACTIVITIES RELATED TO ATTEMPTS TO INFLUENCE LEGISLATION WERE LIMITED TO THOSE THAT EITHER QUALIFY AS EXCEPTIONS TO THE PROHIBITIONS AGAINST SUCH ACTIVITY AS DESCRIBED IN IRC 4945(E) AND REGULATIONS SECTION 53.4945-2(D), OR WERE FOR PURPOSES OF DISCUSSING PROPOSALS RELATED TO PROJECTS JOINTLY FUNDED BY THE FOUNDATION AND A GOVERNMENTAL BODY.

12:03 PM – October 20, 2025

17 Reposts

6 Quotes

435 Likes

3 Bookmarks

Your Task

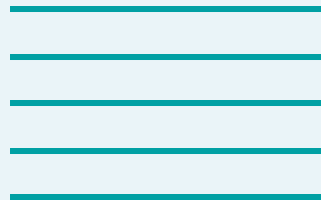
Each “Crisis Response Working Group” (breakout room) is responsible for pulling together a **response strategy** and **communications materials** (including a holding statement, talking points, tough questions, and channels) to reach one set of our key audiences:

Internal / Supporters

- Staff / employees
- Board members
- Grantees
- Donors

External

- Community leaders
- Media
- General public



Small Group Questions

- What do you think is your biggest vulnerability in this scenario?
- What information do you feel like you need to respond to the scenario?
- Who needs to be communicated with in this scenario?
- What do you think your next course of action should be?
- What's the objective (i.e., the best possible outcome) of our response?
- How do we credibly respond to this situation?
- What information do we have to begin drafting our messages?
- What information do we ideally need to finalize our messages?
- Who do we need to collaborate or partner with?
- Have there been any other issues recently that could intensify the situation?

Breaking News!

Today is October 23, 2025



A large donor follows up with a breaking news story

From: Harold Hartman, Donor Harold@HartmanFinance.com
Sent: Thursday, October 23, 2025 9:13 AM
To: Carol Collins, CEO Carol.Collins@JohnDoeHealth.org
Subject: Have you seen this?

Carol – call me when you see this. We need to talk about where my donations are going...

Sent from my iPhone



**Public Service or Public Menace?
Following the Money at John Doe
Health Foundation**

October 23, 2025 | 6:02 AM | Steve Smith, Investigative Reporter

Group Discussion

- Has your risk level changed?
- What do you think is your biggest vulnerability in this new scenario?
- What information do you feel like you need to respond to the new scenario?
- Who needs to be communicated with in this scenario?
- What do you think your next course of action should be?

Refine Communications

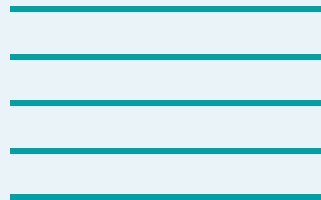
Refine your **response strategy** and **communications materials** (including a holding statement, talking points, tough questions, and channels) based on this updated scenario:

Internal / Supporters

- Staff / employees
- Board members
- Grantees
- Donors

External

- Community leaders
- Media
- General public



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Legislative Update

Today is October 27, 2025

Your organization is called to testify at a joint committee hearing

Group Discussion

- Has your risk level changed?
- What do you think is your biggest vulnerability in this new scenario?
- What information do you feel like you need to respond to the new scenario?
- Who needs to be communicated with in this scenario?
- What do you think your next course of action should be?



State Legislature
Senate Public Safety Committee
Senator Jill Jones, Ranking Member
Chairperson, Subcommittee on Health and Wellness

JOINT COMMITTEE HEARING "Examining Philanthropic Funding and Political Violence: Accountability and Transparency in Grantmaking"

DATE: Thursday, October 30, 2025

TIME: 9:00 AM – 12:00 PM

LOCATION: State Capitol, Senate Chamber

VIRTUAL: [Zoom Meeting](#)

PARTICIPATING COMMITTEES:

- *Senate Public Safety Committee (Lead)* – Senator Jill Jones, Ranking Member, Chairperson, Subcommittee on Health and Wellness
- *Senate Finance & Budget Committee* – Senator William Williams, Chairperson
- *Senate Judiciary Committee* – Senator Bradley Brown, Ranking Member
- *Senate Ethics and Elections Committee* – Senator Radhika Ramesh, Ranking Member

I. Welcome (11:45 AM – 12:00 PM)

Speaker: Senator Jill Jones, Ranking Member, *Senate Public Safety Committee*; Chairperson, Subcommittee on Health and Wellness

II. PANEL: Foundations and Philanthropic Organizations (9:00 AM – 9:45 AM)

Invited Witnesses:

- Carol Collins, CEO and President, *John Doe Health Foundation*
- Eduardo Esteban, Board Chair, *Foundation for Responsible Giving*
- Truc Tran, Chief Executive Officer, *Center for Political Action*

III. PANEL: Nonprofit and Advocacy Organizations (9:45 – 10:30 AM)

Invited Witnesses:

- Asher Ashley, CEO and President, *Health Justice Organization*
- Fallon Fawcett, Board Director, *State Legal Defense Fund*
- Malia McKinley, Founder and CEO, *Faith for the Fight*

IV. PANEL: Law Enforcement and Public Safety (10:30 – 11:15 AM)

Invited Witnesses:

- Natalia Niamato, JD, Civil Action Expert, *National Legal Policy Center*
- Sharon Smith, Emergency Management Director, *State Department of Emergency Services*
- David Donato, Superintendent, *State Police Department*

V. Public Comments (11:15 – 11:45 AM)

VI. Closing Remarks (11:45 AM – 12:00 PM)

Speaker: Senator William Williams, Chairperson, *Senate Finance & Budget Committee*

Finalize Communications

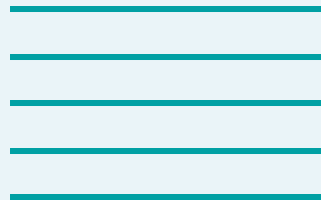
Finalize your **response strategy** and **communications materials** (including a holding statement, talking points, tough questions, and channels) and list of pending questions based on your key audiences:

Internal / Supporters

- Staff / employees
- Board members
- Grantees
- Donors

External

- Community leaders
- Media
- General public

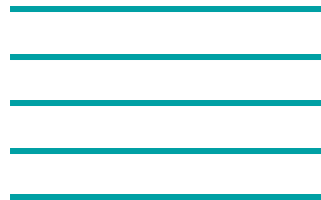


Wrap-Up:

Report out on tabletop exercise

Report Out Questions

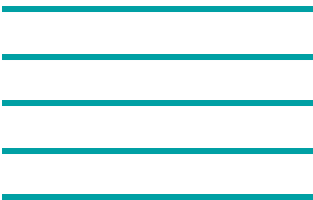
- What were the most important points that your group felt you needed to include in your materials?
- Did you change course after the interruptions?
- What do you feel like you still need to know to respond to this scenario?
- What weak points or gaps in information and/or coordination have you identified?
- How can we bolster those weak points or gaps moving forward?



Contact Us!



- Beth Tritter – Beth.Tritter@fgsglobal.com
- Chrystal Okonta – Chrystal.Okonta@fgsglobal.com





Thank You!