



DECODED®

Managing Up When the Stakes Are High:

What Leadership Needs to Hear (and
How to Say It)



Bridging The Gap

Presented By: | BFS Strategic Partners



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Mara Ash, CIA, CGFM, CMRA, CICA



Mara, Senior Partner at BFS, is a Compliance Expert with over 25 years of experience in finance, compliance, and advisory services across both public and private sectors. She specializes in driving strategic alignment, fostering transparency, and promoting sustainable growth—all while ensuring regulatory compliance. Her deep understanding of government operations and commitment to innovation has made her a trusted advisor in the field.

Mara is also dedicated to supporting public sector auditors and accountants, currently serving as the North American Representative on the IIA Global Advisory Group.

Cindy Watson, CICA



Cindy Watson, Managing Director at BFS, is an expert in financial management, grant compliance, and audit automation, bringing over 25 years of public sector experience. Cindy specializes in streamlining compliance processes and designing customized solutions to enhance audit efficiency. Known for her ability to translate complex regulations into actionable strategies, she has trained countless professionals on navigating federal and state requirements. Cindy's work has strengthened operational frameworks and boosted compliance across a wide range of agencies.

Learning Objectives

Craft effective communication strategies with clarity and confidence.

“
Communication is a skill that you can learn. It’s like riding a bicycle or typing. If you’re willing to work at it, you can rapidly improve the quality of every part of your life.”

Brian Tracy



Understand the importance of compliance communication



Identify communication methods that strengthen trust and ensure transparency



Explore potential stakeholders and their perspectives & concerns



Evaluate proactive approaches to better prepare for potential future challenges

Introduction



Why This Topic Matters Now

Significant changes to grant programs, funding holds, and terminations



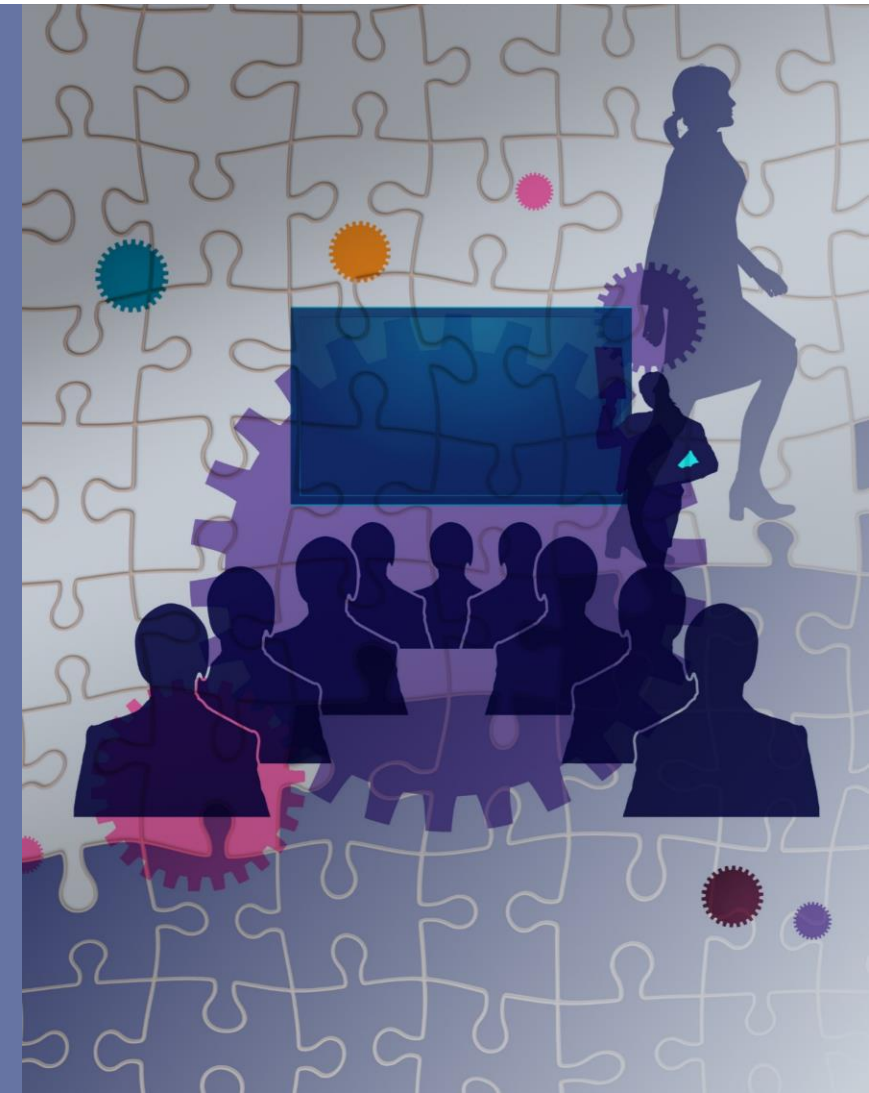
Who is impacted?

Grant managers, program leads, executives, and stakeholders



What we will cover

Strategies to help navigate these discussions effectively



Why is Compliance Communication Important?

Protects
organizational
integrity



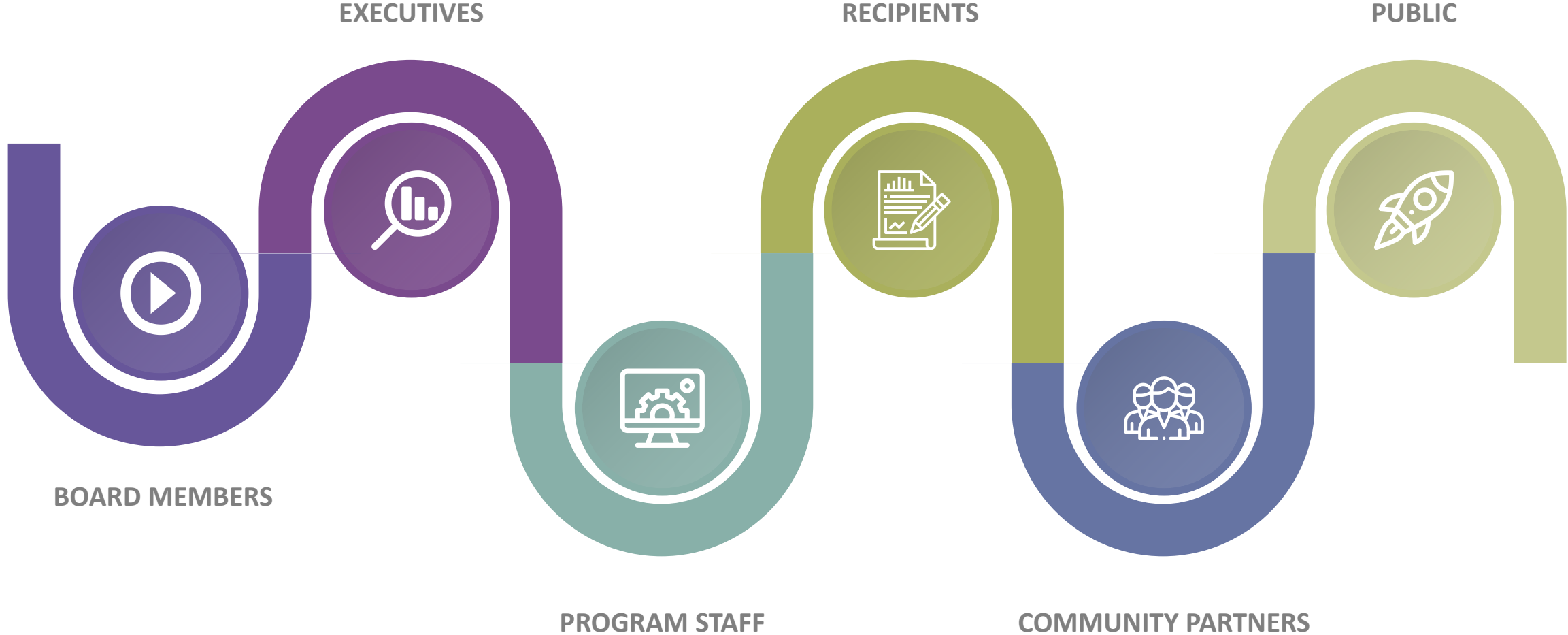
Ensures legal
and regulatory
adherence

Prevents financial
penalties and
reputational
damage



Promotes
ethical behavior

Know Your Stakeholders



Understanding Stakeholders' Perspectives



Common Concerns:



Concern #1

What does this mean for our organization?



Concern #2

How does this impact me?



Concern #3

What do we do next?

Balance Transparency with Reassurance

//
I motivate players through communication, being honest with them, having them respect and appreciate your ability and your help.”

Tommy Lasorda

The Reality of Grant Disruptions

Reasons for program reviews, funding holds, and terminations:



Polling Question #1

How comfortable are you with the concept of **Managing Up**?



**Very comfortable –
I use these skills all
the time.**



**Somewhat
comfortable –
I try, but it's tricky.**



**Not very
comfortable –
I tend to avoid it.**



**What even is
managing up?**

Compelling Compliance Narratives



**Storytelling
techniques**



**Highlighting
benefits of
compliance**



**Addressing
common
objections**



**Stressing the
consequences
of non-compliance**

Communication Frameworks

The AIDA Model:



Communication Frameworks

The 7 Cs of Communication



Clear



Concise



Concrete



Correct



Coherent



Complete



Courteous

Polling Question #2

Which communication framework do you currently use most when corresponding with leadership and/or stakeholders?



AIDA
(Attention,
Interest, Desire,
Action).



7 Cs
(Clear, Concise,
Concrete, Correct,
Coherent, Complete,
Courteous).



A combination
of both.



None/Other
/
I'm not
sure?

Crisis Communication Techniques



01

Be Transparent:

Say what you know, what you don't know, and what comes next.

02

Use Simple, Direct Language:

Avoid technical jargon, focus on clarity.

03

Maintain Consistency:

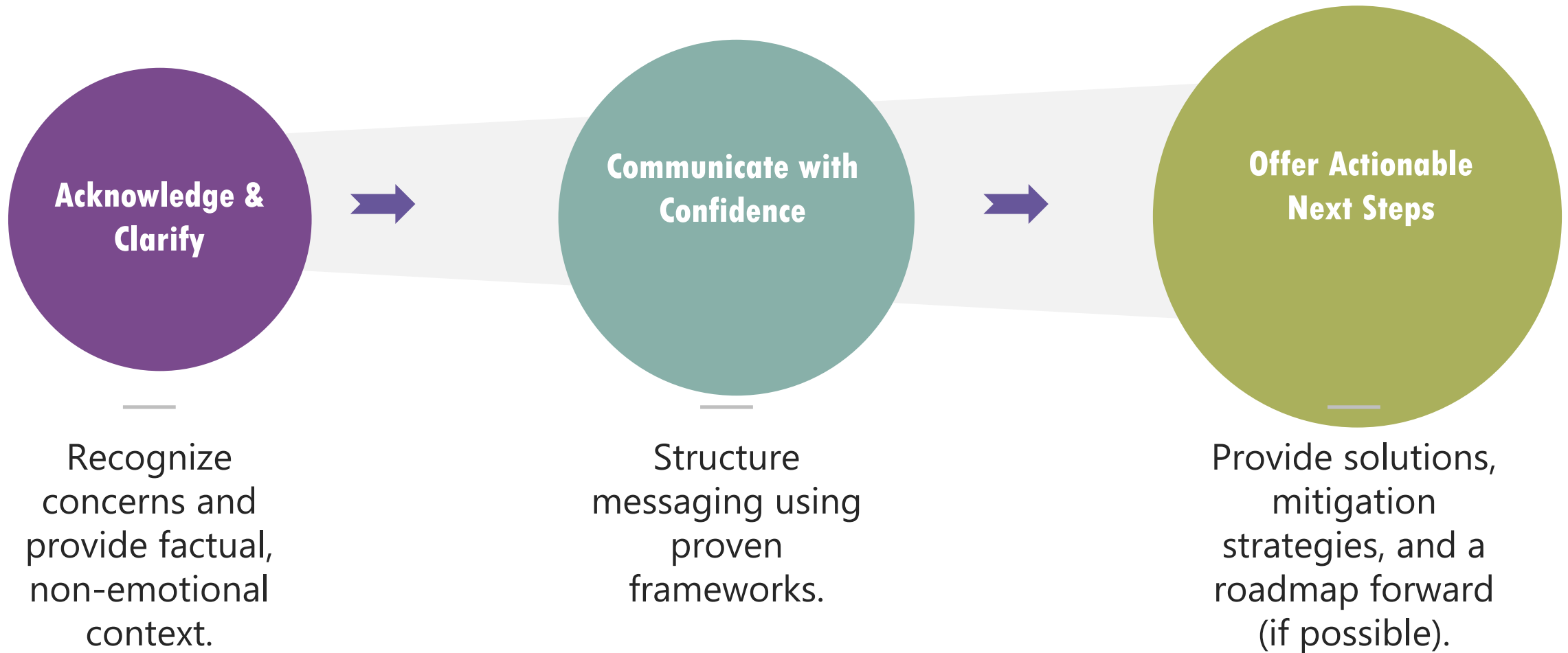
Ensure messaging is aligned across the organization.

04

Anticipate Questions:

Prepare general responses in advance, where possible.

The Three-Part Framework for Difficult Conversations



Tools & Resources for Communicating Disruptions

Real-time reporting tools

Dashboards,
financial
tracking systems.

Messaging templates

Quick-reference
responses for
stakeholders.

FAQ documentation

A ready-made
resource to
address concerns.

Conclusion & Takeaways



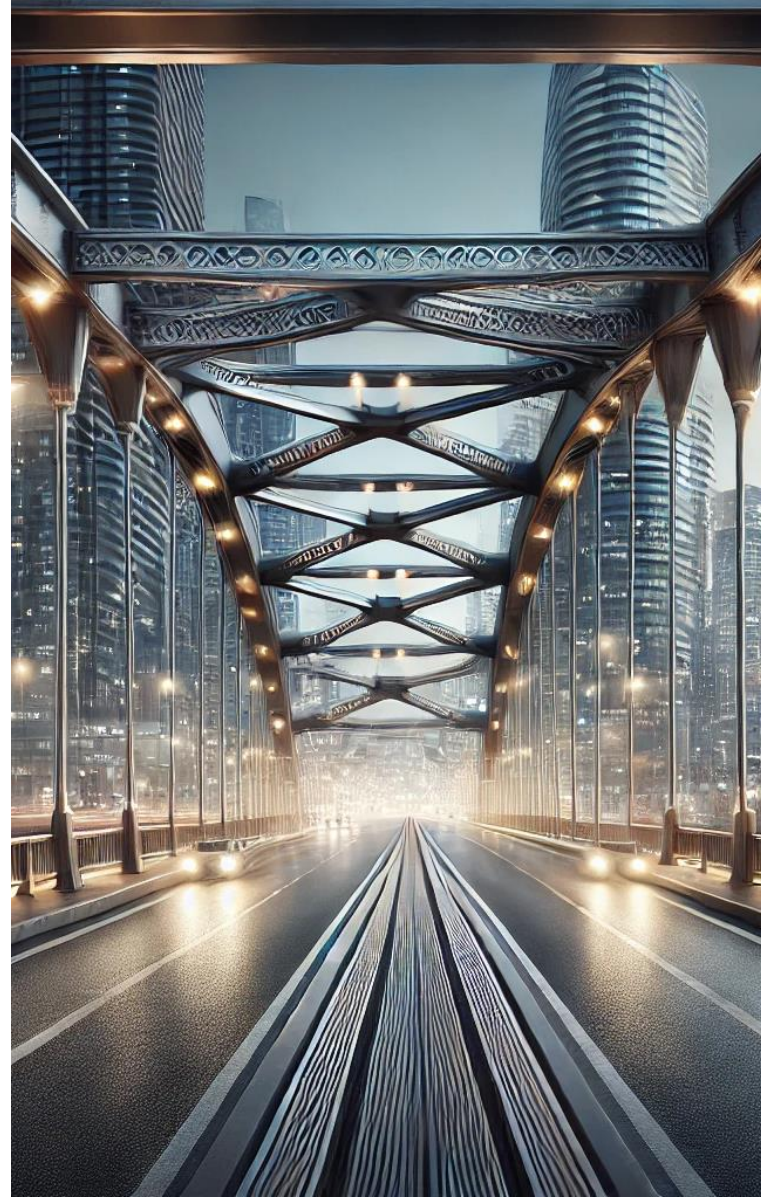
Communicate early, clearly, and with confidence



Transparency and preparation build trust with stakeholders.



Transparency and preparation build trust with stakeholders.



“

The art of communication is the language of leadership.”

-

James Humes

Polling Question #3

How likely are you to apply one of these frameworks in your next big communication?



Very likely.



Somewhat likely.

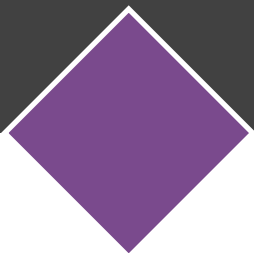
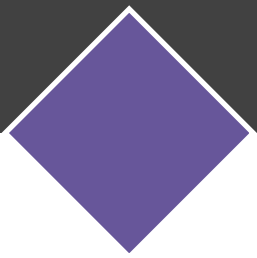


Not sure.



I still have questions.

Questions



Answers

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