

## Managing Risk in your Communication

In this module, you will step into the shoes of Ari Thompson, a Senior Adviser.

Your task is to write a letter to local residents about a government-funded project.

You'll need to make sure your message is clear, accessible, and encourages public engagement.

Along the way, you'll learn how to avoid common communication mistakes that can lead to confusion or mistrust.

A government-funded infrastructure upgrade is scheduled to begin in two weeks in a semi-rural district.

The project involves installing a new water filtration system and improving flood barriers—part of a broader sustainability and resilience strategy.

Many residents in the affected area have a history of cautiousness toward government interventions due to prior consultation fatigue and concerns about transparency.

Your manager has asked you to **draft a letter** that will be sent directly to **all local households and community leaders**.

### Acronyms in the Opening Paragraph

As you begin drafting the letter, you want to open with a concise summary of the project and who's involved.

You want to keep the letter short, but will your readers understand?

- Only explain unfamiliar acronyms; keep common ones as-is.
- Spell out each agency name with acronyms in brackets the first time they appear.
- Use all acronyms throughout without explanation.

**Correct answer:** Spell out each agency name with acronyms in brackets the first time they appear.

Explaining acronyms helps ensure clarity, especially when communicating with external audiences unfamiliar with government jargon. Full names rather than acronyms mitigates the risk of not understanding.

Managing risk is the key outcome here.

## How do you manage language and tone?

Your initial draft borrows phrasing from briefing papers and internal strategy documents.

It sounds official and comprehensive—but the language is dense.

What's your approach?

- Keep the long letter but add a brief summary.
- Send the letter as-is. Formal equals professional, right?
- Edit for plain language, shorten to one page.

**Correct answer:** Edit for plain language, shorten to one page.

This helps ensure your message is accessible to a wide audience—including those without policy or government backgrounds.

## How long should the letter be?

After a few hours of drafting, your letter spans nearly three full pages.

It includes background, partner agency details, timelines, engagement history, and technical specs.

What do you do before sending it?

- Send the full version as-is, assuming more detail is always better.
- Edit the letter down to one page using plain, concise language.
- Keep the full version but bold key sections for readability.

**Correct answer:** Edit the letter down to one page using plain, concise language.

Shortening your message to one page makes it easier for readers to digest key points.

Most people won't read long, dense documents.

## Final Check Before Sending

You've finished your draft.

You've proofread it twice and reviewed your internal checklist.

The deadline is tomorrow morning.

You want to ensure it's ready to go out to the community. Do you...

- Send the draft to a colleague outside your immediate team for a fresh perspective.
- Rely on your usual proofreading checklist and review the letter yourself one last time.
- Ask a peer who helped draft the letter to give it a quick scan for any errors.

**Correct answer:** Send the draft to a colleague outside your immediate team for a fresh perspective.

Getting someone outside your immediate team to review the letter offers a fresh pair of eyes and helps identify blind spots in clarity, tone, and assumptions.